



# The state of language learning in primary and secondary schools in England

Teresa Tinsley

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Kathryn Board was Chief Executive of CILT, The National Centre for Languages from 2008 and in that role worked with specialists and a wide range of educational institutions to provide advice on educational policy related to the teaching of languages as well as on initiatives aimed at increasing language learning across the UK. Before joining CILT, she spent 30 years working for the British Council in a number of international and management roles. She also led for CfBT Education Trust on the development of a Languages strategy and the delivery of a number of national projects to support language teaching in English schools. Now partially retired, she continues to work on research projects where she can bring in her expertise. Kathryn speaks Spanish, German and Dutch and is currently working hard on improving her Arabic.



### Teresa Tinsley

Teresa Tinsley established and developed the Language Trends series of surveys which have charted the health of languages in various sectors of education since 2002. As well as producing and analysing information on the situation of languages in English secondary schools, the surveys have also covered provision for community languages across the UK, and language learning in Further and Adult Education.

Formerly Director of Communications at CILT, the National Centre for Languages, Teresa founded Alcantara Communications in 2011 and since then has undertaken policy-focused research on languages for the British Academy and the British Council, as well as CfBT Education Trust. Her work for CfBT includes an international review of primary languages, *Lessons from abroad*, as well as the 2011 and 2012 Language Trends reports.

## Acknowledgements

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## Executive summary

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### Introduction

The Language Trends survey 2013/4 is the 12th in a series of annual research exercises charting the health of language teaching and learning in English schools. The findings are based on an online survey completed by teachers in a large sample of secondary schools across the country from both the state and independent sectors. In 2012, and again in 2013 following the announcement that language teaching at Key Stage 2 would become statutory for all pupils in September 2014, a national sample of primary schools has been included in the survey to enable the impact of the new policy on teachers and pupils to be tracked in detail. This report focuses on particular issues of concern arising from the current policy context.

This year's research exercise has been carried out under the joint management of CfBT Education Trust and the British Council.

### Key survey findings

#### Languages in primary schools

As many as 95 per cent of the primary schools that responded to this survey are already teaching a language and 42 per cent say they already meet the requirements of the new National Curriculum which will come into force in September 2014. The overwhelming majority (85 per cent) welcome the forthcoming statutory status for language teaching. However, in many cases the amount of time allocated each week for language learning and the linguistic competency levels of classroom teachers are unlikely to be sufficient to meet the expectations set out in the new programmes of study. Three quarters of respondents believe that the teaching of reading, writing and grammatical understanding, which are requirements of the new curriculum, will be challenging.

A total of 30 per cent of responding primary schools have a member of staff with a degree in the language they are teaching. However, 24 per cent report that GCSE is the highest level of linguistic competence held by any member of their staff.

Confidence levels among classroom teachers at Key Stage 2 are not increasing, with 29 per cent (up from 27 per cent in 2012) of respondents reporting that staff teaching languages in Years 5 and 6 in their school are not confident. Schools are also aware of the need for further training to boost staff competence and confidence and also highlight the need for support and guidance, particularly in developing effective systems of monitoring and assessing learning. This year's survey also shows that 33 per cent of responding schools (the same proportion as in the 2012 survey) do not have systems in place to monitor or assess pupil progress in the foreign language.

In spite of the acknowledged need for training and support, this year's research suggests a low level of engagement with subject-specific continuing professional development (CPD) to enable teachers to improve their subject knowledge to teach languages to Key Stage 2 pupils. Much support that was previously available through local authorities or secondary school partnerships no longer exists.

As many as 50 per cent of schools are concerned about the pressures on the curriculum and about finding sufficient curriculum time to be able to integrate languages properly in order that the expectations of the new National Curriculum can be met.

### Transition from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3

Nearly half (46 per cent) of primary schools have no contact at all with language specialists in their local secondary schools. Indeed, there is evidence of a severe lack of cohesion right across the system between primary and secondary schools, with only 11 per cent of state secondary schools reporting that they receive or request data on pupil achievements in Key Stage 2. Less than one third (27 per cent) of state secondary schools can ensure that pupils coming into Year 7 are able to continue with the same language they learned in primary school. In the independent sector the percentage is higher, at 48 per cent. The number of state secondary schools who say they are receiving pupils with experience of language learning in Key Stage 2 has gone down to 72 per cent in 2013 from 84 per cent in 2012. In many cases where there is evidence of prior learning, secondary schools regard it as being of poor or variable quality and insufficient on which to build.

While 18 per cent of state secondary schools report that they have contacts with all their feeder primary schools, the majority say that they are unable to establish effective contacts with the very large number of feeder primary schools. This is due to teachers' workloads, financial constraints and geographical distance. With the statutory teaching of languages at Key Stage 2 due to commence in September 2014, it is a concern that the level of collaboration between schools appears to be declining rather than gathering pace.

### Languages in secondary schools

This year's survey shows that 27 per cent of state schools carry out some form of disapplication of pupils from languages in Key Stage 3. This happens where schools take a pupil out of a particular subject, often in order to give additional help in areas such as literacy or numeracy. This means that despite languages being a statutory requirement for all, many lower-ability pupils do not learn a foreign language at all. A small but growing proportion of schools (of just over seven per cent) do not teach a foreign language to all pupils throughout Key Stage 3. These practices are rarely seen in the independent sector.

Pressures of time and funding are adversely affecting teachers' access to CPD, with the most widespread form of CPD being that provided by examination boards. Teachers are increasingly turning to online webinars and social media to access professional development.

There has been rapid growth in the adoption of the International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE) as an alternative to language GCSEs in the independent sector. This reflects dissatisfaction with the GCSE examination previously noted in both the independent and the state sectors. The use of alternative accreditation in the state sector is declining with the withdrawal of Asset Languages examinations and changes to the range of qualifications which are included in school performance tables.

More than three quarters of state schools say that implementing the new National Curriculum will be challenging, particularly providing continuity of learning from Key Stage 2 and enabling pupils to reach the required standard. The majority of teachers in both the state and independent sectors (83 per cent and 86 per cent respectively) are not confident that the changes being introduced by the government will have a positive impact on the teaching of languages in their school.



### **The English Baccalaureate (EBacc) and its impact on Key Stage 4**

The EBacc continues to have a positive effect on the take-up of languages in Key Stage 4 and the number of schools with more than 50 per cent of their pupils taking a language has continued to rise. Some 50 per cent of state schools report an increase over the past three years in the numbers of pupils taking at least one language at Key Stage 4, and in 33 per cent of schools this increase is by ten per cent or more. However, in about one in five schools, take-up for languages remains persistently low (below 25 per cent) with no indication of an increase. 31 per cent of schools have used the EBacc as an opportunity to encourage students to take a qualification in their home language.

Although higher levels of take-up of languages are still associated with more advantaged schools and those with higher educational achievement overall, the EBacc has improved the take-up of languages at Key Stage 4 in schools across the socio-economic spectrum. With the exception of schools in the very lowest quintile for educational performance, pupil numbers for languages in Key Stage 4 have increased in schools across the performance range – and especially in schools in the second lowest quintile in terms of educational performance.

The increase in numbers has largely been the result of persuasion and encouragement; where compulsion is used, it is often only for certain groups of pupils. This year the proportion of state schools in which the study of a language is compulsory at Key Stage 4 has reached its lowest ever level at 16 per cent (down from 22 per cent in 2012). The proportion in the independent sector also continues to decline (69 per cent, down from 77 per cent in 2012). Some 30 per cent of state schools do not make provision for all pupils to take a language at Key Stage 4 even though it is an entitlement subject and schools are required to make courses available to all pupils who wish to study them.

There is no evidence yet of any widespread positive impact of the EBacc on take-up for languages post-16.

### **Languages at post-16**

The number of students choosing to study a language at A level in the independent sector is declining at an alarmingly fast rate, with 43 per cent of independent schools reporting declines compared with 35 per cent in 2012 and 30 per cent in 2011. This is in reaction to what is perceived as harsh and unpredictable grading by exam boards and the need of students to be more certain of achieving the highest grades to secure university places. This must be a major concern to universities since the independent sector has traditionally been a reliable source of linguists for study at higher education level. While numbers are more stable in the state sector, there is evidence that where numbers of students wishing to study a language at A level are very low, schools say that they are not able to offer courses because they are not financially viable.

Schools also report that continuation rates from AS to A2 – already lower for languages than for many subjects – are getting worse due to the significant increase in the level of linguistic complexity between GCSE and AS level and the difficulty of predicting grades at A2. Respondents to this survey do not believe that the move to a terminal exam at A2 will improve either predictability or take-up and only five per cent of state schools (six per cent of independent schools) believe that the reforms to A level will improve take-up following GCSE.

This survey shows that few students choose to combine languages with science, technology or maths (STEM) subjects at A level, particularly in the independent sector. Languages are not seen as valuable in the same way as STEM subjects are either for future employment or university entry.

### Language choice

Three quarters of primary schools teach French to their pupils while a fifth offer Spanish. The number of primary schools offering other languages is very small.

In secondary schools French, Spanish and German are easily the most widely taught languages. Arabic, Italian, Japanese, Chinese and Russian are offered much less frequently and often only as extra-curricular subjects. The range of languages offered is much richer in the independent sector.

Spanish continues to grow in popularity, with 37 per cent of state secondary schools and 48 per cent of independent schools having seen pupil numbers for Spanish rise in recent years. The recent increase in pupil numbers for GCSE in the state sector means that more state schools are now reporting increases than declines in numbers for French (32 per cent report increases and 22 per cent report declines). German has fared less well, with 17 per cent of state schools reporting increases in numbers and 18 per cent reporting declines. However, in the independent sector one third of schools report declines both for French and German.

While opportunities to learn a second foreign language are quite widespread, this is more often the case in the independent sector than it is in state schools. Approximately 33 per cent of state secondary schools and 90 per cent of independent schools offer all pupils the opportunity to learn more than one foreign language in Key Stage 3. In most cases, the second foreign language is learned concurrently alongside the first.

There are no strong indications that lesser taught languages are gaining ground in the school system. The importance of many of these languages was highlighted in the British Council's *Languages for the future* report published in November 2013.<sup>1</sup> However, the study of Chinese is increasing slowly from a small base, with three per cent of primary schools, six per cent of state secondary schools and ten per cent of independent schools offering pupils the opportunity to learn Chinese as a curriculum subject. However, in common with other lesser taught languages, the sustainability of Chinese is not assured.

<sup>1</sup> British Council (2013)

## **Conclusions**

The evidence of the positive impact of the EBacc on the take-up of languages at Key Stage 4 is very encouraging, as is the finding that so many primary schools welcome the imminent introduction of statutory language teaching to all pupils at Key Stage 2. However, it is important not to misinterpret these developments as signs that the teaching and learning of languages in English primary and secondary schools has a clean bill of health. The hundreds of schools who responded to the 2013/14 survey have provided detailed evidence of a number of significant issues, principally:

- the need for further training of primary school teachers
- the lack of cohesion at the transition from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3
- the growing exclusion of certain groups of pupils from language study at Key Stages 3 and 4
- the deep crisis of language study post-16.

All these issues need tackling with vigour if the language education received by children in England is to equal or surpass the quality of that provided in the highest-performing education systems. There is also still a great deal to be done to convince school leaders, parents and pupils themselves of the value of languages and that speaking only English in today's world is as big a disadvantage as speaking no English. This Trends survey 2013/14 shows we are still a long way from achieving the quality and consistency in language education necessary to prepare children adequately for life and work in a globalised society.

# 1

## Introduction

Language Trends 2013/14 is the latest in a series of annual reports started in 2002 which chart the health of language teaching in English schools. Traditionally based on a nationwide survey of a large sample of secondary schools, the research was extended in 2012 to include primary as well as secondary schools. The 2013/14 survey also included both primary and secondary schools. This report therefore provides a comprehensive and current picture of language provision in English schools at a time of extensive educational policy change.

### 1.1 | The policy context

#### Primary schools

Following the government's review of the national curriculum, the study of a foreign language will become a compulsory element in the Key Stage 2 curriculum from September 2014.<sup>2</sup> Its expectations for what should be covered by the end of Year 6 were published in February 2013, with a strong focus on high standards of practical communication using both written and spoken language. The initial proposal for pupils to study one of seven named languages has been withdrawn; schools may teach any modern or ancient language and should enable pupils to make substantial progress in one language.<sup>3</sup>

The policy to introduce foreign languages into the Key Stage 2 curriculum picked up from the previous government's National Languages Strategy, which had as one of its main objectives that all primary schools should be in a position to teach a foreign language throughout Key Stage 2 by 2010.<sup>4</sup> In 2002, when it was published, around 20–25 per cent of primary schools were thought to be teaching a language. A programme of training and development saw 92 per cent of primary schools offering a language at the time of a survey carried out in 2008 and published in 2010.<sup>5</sup> However, with the change of government in 2010, a review of the National Curriculum and the withdrawal of funding for local authority support, there was some evidence that this proportion was declining.<sup>6</sup>

Language Trends 2012 showed that 97 per cent of responding primary schools were teaching a language – albeit with a very wide spectrum of practice across the sector and a lack of consistency in both approach and outcomes. The 2013/14 survey aims to report further on how state primary schools are preparing for compulsory languages teaching and the challenges they face.

#### Transition from primary to secondary school

The Language Trends survey 2012 identified the disjuncture between primary and secondary schools as a major issue for future success of primary languages.<sup>7</sup> Since the publication of the new National Curriculum, contributions to the public debate on the forthcoming introduction of compulsory language learning in all primary schools have continued to stress the importance of overcoming this challenge.<sup>8</sup> For this reason we have included a special focus on the topic of transition in this year's survey, allocating a separate chapter and drawing together findings from both primary and secondary respondents.

<sup>2</sup> DfE (2013a)

<sup>3</sup> DfE (2013b)

<sup>4</sup> DfES (2002a)

<sup>5</sup> Wade, Marshall and O'Donnell (2009)

<sup>6</sup> CILT (2011)

<sup>7</sup> Tinsley & Board (2013)

<sup>8</sup> For example, the House of Lords debate on foreign language teaching held on 16/1/14 <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201314/ldhansrd/text/140116-gc0001.htm#14011665000552>

## Secondary schools

The present government's major policy in secondary schools affecting languages has been the English Baccalaureate (EBacc).<sup>9</sup> Originally conceived as a 'new award' aimed at strengthening the 'status' of academic subjects and awarded to any student who achieved a good GCSE in English, maths, science, a humanities subject and a modern or ancient language, it was introduced as an accountability measure for schools from January 2011. Its immediate effectiveness in boosting the numbers of pupils taking language subjects in Key Stage 4, identified in Language Trends reports in 2011 and 2012, was confirmed in the entry figures for languages GCSEs published in August 2013.

In February 2013 the Secretary of State announced a new accountability measure for schools, based on pupils' progression in eight subjects (three of which must be EBacc subjects) between Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4.<sup>10</sup> This measure sits alongside the EBacc and the performance measure based on pupil achievement of five A\*-C grades at GCSE and has been interpreted by some as a watering down of the place of languages within school performance measures. One aim of the current survey was therefore to explore whether this upward trend in take-up for languages at Key Stage 4 is continuing, and whether there is yet any impact on the number of pupils continuing their language studies to A level.

The government has also made changes to qualifications which count as equivalents towards schools' five A\*-C GCSE performance measure. Qualifications such as National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) language units did not meet the new criteria to be included and the examination board OCR has withdrawn its Asset Languages qualifications.<sup>11</sup> The government also intends to make significant changes to the structure and content of GCSE exams, including an increase in standards and a new grading system. The Secretary of State has said that he wants to see an end to the 'tiering' of GCSEs, so that all candidates have access to all grades. He wants the examinations to be linear, taken exclusively at the end of the course, with fewer 'bite-sized' questions and examination aids used only where absolutely necessary.<sup>12</sup> The new GCSE subject criteria for modern languages were published in June 2013 and syllabuses are now being developed by examination boards for first teaching in September 2016. Our report gathers the views of language teachers on how they think these changes will affect their subject.

The new school performance tables only recognise GCSE examinations taken at the end of Key Stage 4 and therefore act as a disincentive for schools to practise 'early entry' of pupils in Year 9 or 10 in order to free up more time for other subjects. Our report investigates evidence of the impact of early entry for GCSE on the subsequent take-up for languages by students at post-16.

<sup>9</sup> DfE (2010)

<sup>10</sup> Gove, Statement on Curriculum and Exam Reform (7 February 2013)

<sup>11</sup> OCR (2013a)

<sup>12</sup> Gove, Ofqual Policy Steer Letter: Reforming Key Stage 4 Qualifications (6 February 2013)

### Historical background to the status of languages in the National Curriculum

One of the stated aims of the English Baccalaureate policy was to boost the number of pupils taking a language in Key Stage 4, since numbers had been in decline since 2002. Foreign languages were established as a foundation subject – compulsory for all pupils up to the age of 16 – in the Education Act of 1988 and the first cohort of 16-year-olds completed their full five years of language study a decade later in 1998. The 2002 Green Paper on ‘Extending opportunities, raising standards 14-19’<sup>13</sup> aimed to free up the curriculum post-14 in order to introduce a wider range of qualifications that pupils would find motivating and relevant. One of the consequences of this was that languages ceased to be a compulsory subject at Key Stage 4. A decline in the study of languages at Key Stage 4 was immediate, although under the terms of the 2002 Education Act languages did not officially become an optional subject until September 2004. The ‘Language Trends’ survey was established to monitor this situation and has over the years explored the reasons behind the dramatic decline in language learning from 78 per cent of the cohort sitting a GCSE in languages in 2001, to just 40 per cent in 2011<sup>14</sup> (see further analysis of examination data in Chapter 3).

While some of the reasons for the decline that emerged through the data collected by the Language Trends surveys were attitudinal (parents, students and in some cases school leaders not being sufficiently convinced of the value of languages), there were also structural reasons. A growing number of attractive and alternative qualifications offered other routes – perceived by teachers and pupils as easier – to the ‘five A\*-C at GCSE’ required by league tables. There was a significant discrepancy between language colleges, independent schools and grammar schools on the one hand, where the provision and the take-up of languages remained relatively high, and comprehensive and other schools where take-up of languages went into severe decline. The perception – and, many argued, the reality – that languages were a ‘hard’ subject was a significant negative factor in the culture of league tables and school targets.<sup>15</sup>

The 2013/14 survey aimed to shed further light on attitudes towards languages and the balance of take-up across different types of schools working in different circumstances.

<sup>13</sup> DfES (2002b)

<sup>14</sup> Tinsley & Han (2012)

<sup>15</sup> See discussion and documents at [http://www.all-london.org.uk/severe\\_grading.htm#Current](http://www.all-london.org.uk/severe_grading.htm#Current)



### A level languages

Take-up for languages at A level became a serious public concern with the publication of the summer 2013 A level results, which showed very steep drops in entries for both French and German. Previous concern over declining numbers taking language had sparked a high-profile enquiry into languages provision over a decade ago which concluded that the level of uptake for languages post-16 was insufficient for the nation's needs.<sup>16</sup> It has since fallen back by a further 15 per cent since the turn of the century (in the context of an overall rise of 11 per cent in A level entries across all subjects) and for this reason the situation of languages in schools post-16 forms a major focus of this report.

We look particularly at progression rates and the reasons why they are poor in languages compared with other subjects. A 2012 report on progression rates in 11 subjects for the DfE<sup>17</sup> found that French, German and Spanish had the lowest progression rates of all from GCSE to AS – 13 per cent, 12 per cent and 19 per cent respectively. This compared to Biology with the highest progression rate, at 36 per cent. The report also found that only nine per cent of pupils taking French to GCSE progressed to A level (A2). This impacts on the demand to study language degrees at university, where languages have been designated 'strategically important and vulnerable subjects' since 2005.<sup>18</sup> With the government's proposals to reintroduce terminal examinations for A level,<sup>19</sup> this year's Language Trends survey explored the potential impact of this change on the numbers of pupils choosing to study a language at A level.

### Comparisons between the independent and the state sectors

Language Trends surveys have, over many years, drawn attention to the differences in provision and practice between the independent and the state sector as regards languages. The presentation of findings comparing fee-paying schools with those which are publicly funded has been useful in several ways. Firstly, it is of interest to our readership, many of whom are teachers working in the independent or state sector and who wish to see findings relevant to their own context. The comparison between the state and independent sectors has highlighted issues of elitism and inequality of access to foreign language education. It has also shown the different approaches and practices as regards provision which are interesting and potentially instructive for both sectors. The comparison of findings this year is particularly relevant in view of the Secretary of State for Education's public statements regarding his ambition to eliminate the differences between state and independent schools.<sup>20</sup>

### International comparisons

European institutions including the European Commission and the Council of Europe have been major players in encouraging policy development on language learning. Multilingualism is seen as crucial to enabling European businesses to take advantage of opportunities within the Single Market, as well as enabling individuals to live, work or study in another member state. European institutions have been particularly active in encouraging the teaching of languages from a young age, as well as the learning of two foreign languages.<sup>21</sup> Across Europe as a whole the major trends have been the lowering of the age at which compulsory language learning begins, an increase in the proportion of students learning two or more foreign languages, and the growth of interest in Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) by which non-language subjects are taught through the medium of a new language.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>16</sup> The Nuffield Foundation (2000)

<sup>17</sup> DfE (2012)

<sup>18</sup> HEFCE (2011)

<sup>19</sup> Gove, Reform of GCE A levels. Letter to Ofqual (14 March 2013)

<sup>20</sup> Gove, speech (3 February 2014)

<sup>21</sup> Barcelona European Council (2002)

<sup>22</sup> Eurydice/Eurostat (2012)

In June 2012, the European Commission published the results of the first European Survey on Language Competences.<sup>23</sup> This showed that only nine per cent of English pupils surveyed at age 15 were competent in their first foreign language beyond a basic level, compared with 42 per cent of their peers across all the European countries taking part. There are now proposals to introduce two European ‘benchmarks’ in relation to language learning. The first relates to the proportion of 15-year-olds achieving ‘beyond basic’ competence in their first foreign language, and the second relates to the proportion of the cohort learning more than one foreign language.<sup>24</sup> The focus on more than one foreign language derives from a recognition, at European policy level, that ‘English is not enough’ – whether as a mother tongue or as the first foreign language taught, and that in today’s international labour market, individuals require the ability to use several languages and to acquire more as required throughout their professional career.<sup>25</sup> Reliable data on the extent to which pupils in secondary schools study more than one foreign language are hard to come by and this year’s survey seeks to remedy this.

## 1.2 | The value of language skills

The last few years have seen a steady stream of reports highlighting the importance of language competence for individuals and for the economy. These have included reports by major employer organisations, namely the Confederation of British Industry (CBI)<sup>26</sup> and the British Chambers of Commerce (BCC),<sup>27</sup> calling for improvements to language education in schools in order to support UK aspirations for growth and improved export performance.

The British Academy has added to these economic arguments evidence on the social and cultural value of languages for intercultural relations at home and abroad and, in February 2013, published a major report on supply and demand for language skills across the UK, drawing attention to the need for education, business and government to work together to address the ‘market failure’ in language learning currently afflicting the UK.<sup>28</sup> Its key finding was that the UK is suffering from a growing deficit in foreign language skills at a time when global demand for language skills is expanding. It found that the range and nature of languages being taught is insufficient and, crucially, that language skills are needed at all levels in the workforce, not just by an internationally mobile élite. The report was followed up in November 2013 with the publication of new research on the need for languages in UK diplomacy and security.<sup>29</sup>

Also in November 2013 the British Council published a report outlining the ten languages most needed by the UK in order to maintain and develop its economic and cultural wellbeing and enhance the employment opportunities of young people entering the world of work.<sup>30</sup> It found that three quarters of the British public are unable to speak any of the ten languages identified as crucial for Britain’s future and concluded that the UK must take a strategic approach in planning for the effective development of its language capacity.

All these reports have received extensive press coverage and an increasingly strong case for language learning is now being made by influential national bodies and organisations. In tracking the behaviour and choices of schools and pupils, *Language Trends 2013/14* aims to explore the possible impact of such messages on the take-up and provision for languages.

<sup>23</sup> European Commission (2012a)

<sup>24</sup> European Commission (2012b)

<sup>25</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> CBI/Pearson Education (2013)

<sup>27</sup> British Chambers of Commerce (2012)

<sup>28</sup> Tinsley (2013)

<sup>29</sup> British Academy (2014)

<sup>30</sup> British Council (2013)

### 1.3 | Language Trends 2013/14

Details of the methodology and response rate to this year's Language Trends surveys are set out in Chapter 2. In order to set the findings of the 2013/14 Language Trends survey within the context of educational outcomes at 16 and 18, this report includes an analysis of GCSE and A level data on languages over the past 10–12 years, including the most recent figures from summer 2013. In the case of A level it looks further back, to the mid-1990s. Using the survey responses, which capture data on uptake for languages in Years 10 and 11, it is possible to project future trends in GCSE entries.

Please note the following:

- All surveys took place in the autumn term. Therefore, where dates are mentioned, the academic year in question is that beginning in the year quoted, e.g. 2013 refers to the academic year 2013/14.
- Percentages have been rounded to the nearest per cent throughout.
- The report uses the term 'languages' to refer to all languages except English, Latin and Ancient Greek, and does not use qualifiers such as 'modern' or 'foreign' except where there is an explicit need to do so. For example, where the report also refers to Latin and Ancient Greek, this is made explicit by distinguishing between 'modern' and 'ancient' languages. However in general the simpler term 'languages' is preferred.

# 2

## Research design and data collection

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The Language Trends survey of secondary schools in England has been carried out annually since 2002 to track developments in language provision and take-up.<sup>31</sup> In both 2012 and 2013 state primary schools were also surveyed.

### 2.1 | Analysis of examination data

Entry and achievement figures for public examinations such as GCSE and A level provide one of the few comprehensive sources of national data on the situation of languages in secondary schools. UK-wide figures, comprising entries from learners of all ages from all institutions are provided by the Joint Council for Qualifications in August each year. A few months later, the Department for Education (DfE) makes available a more finely-grained analysis relating to specific cohorts of pupils in English schools. These data have become increasingly rich in recent years, permitting an analysis of GCSE and A level entries for languages broken down by region and by gender, as well as by different types of school. The findings of the 2013/14 Language Trends survey have therefore been prefaced by a presentation of DfE examination data relating to languages, in order to set the responses of schools within a broader context and to enable a more insightful interpretation.

### 2.2 | Development of the questionnaires

The questionnaires were developed in August 2013 by the researchers in consultation with the Association for Language Learning (ALL) and the Independent Schools' Modern Languages Association (ISMLA). The online surveys were piloted by a number of school-based heads of languages and primary languages coordinators in early September 2013.

#### Primary questionnaire

Questions were based on those included in the 2012 survey, in order to track emerging trends. However, the wording of certain questions was amended in order to clarify or explore further a number of topics covered in the 2012 survey. In addition, a small number of new questions relating specifically to the imminent introduction of foreign languages as a National Curriculum subject at Key Stage 2 were also included. Questions were designed to explore the extent of provision for foreign languages, which languages were offered, and how the teaching was organised. They sought to determine the extent to which primary schools were in contact with local secondary schools and asked about perceived strengths and challenges in relation to the future status of languages. More specifically, the following areas were covered:

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<sup>31</sup> [http://www.cilt.org.uk/home/research\\_and\\_statistics/language\\_trends\\_surveys/secondary1.aspx](http://www.cilt.org.uk/home/research_and_statistics/language_trends_surveys/secondary1.aspx)

- Whether the school offers pupils the opportunity to learn a foreign language in or outside class time
- If schools are not already teaching languages, whether they have done so in the past
- Which languages are offered in and outside class time
- How schools monitor and assess progress in language learning
- What types of contact schools have with local secondary schools
- What documentation forms the basis of the languages programme
- Who provides the teaching of languages, and how confident they are in teaching a language
- How schools access continuing professional development (CPD) for languages
- Strengths and challenges
- Whether schools will be making changes to language teaching provision in order to meet the requirements of the new National Curriculum
- Whether schools welcome statutory status for languages in Key Stage 2 (NEW)

### **Secondary questionnaire**

The core questions explored secondary school languages provision and participation/take-up in each key stage and any recent changes schools have implemented. To enable longitudinal comparisons, many of the questions in the questionnaire were the same or similar to those in previous years' surveys. Some new questions were added in order to gain further information on issues emerging as particularly important in 2013/14, including take-up and continuation post-16, opportunities to learn more than one foreign language, and confidence in recent government reforms. Some questions from previous years have been omitted as being of less relevance and to prevent the questionnaire becoming overly long.

The following general areas were explored:

- The range of languages offered in schools at Key Stage 3, Key Stage 4, post-16 and outside curriculum time
- Whether pupils have the opportunity to learn more than one foreign language (NEW)
- Whether it will be challenging for schools to implement the new National Curriculum and reformed subject content for GCSE, and what the greatest areas of challenge will be
- How secondary schools access CPD for languages
- Accreditation offered for languages
- Whether schools feel confident that the changes currently being implemented will improve the situation for languages (NEW)

In addition, the following key stage specific questions were explored:

### **Key Stage 3**

- Whether all pupils study a language throughout Key Stage 3 and any changes that have been introduced
- Whether schools have contacts with local primary schools on language issues and how they build on pupils' prior learning to ensure continuity and progression from Key Stage 2

### **Key Stage 4**

- Whether languages are optional or compulsory for some or all pupils at Key Stage 4 in the school
- Whether any pupils are prevented from studying a language in Key Stage 4
- The proportion of pupils currently studying at least one language in Year 10 and Year 11
- Current school trends in language take-up at Key Stage 4
- The time allocation for languages in Key Stage 4
- Impact of the EBacc on languages provision and take-up among different groups of pupils

### **Post-16**

- Current school trends in language take-up post-16
- Whether increases in take-up at Key Stage 4 as a result of the EBacc are also leading to increases post-16 (NEW)
- Continuation rates from AS to A2
- The likely impact of proposed reforms to A level on languages (NEW)

## **2.3 | Data collection**

A random sample of 3,000 schools was selected from the population of state-funded mainstream primary schools with pupils reaching the end of Key Stage 2, thus excluding infant and first schools. The sample was selected to be representative by region and performance quintile (based on the average point score as published in the 2012 Primary School Performance Tables).

A random sample of 2,500 secondary schools was also selected from the Department for Education database, EduBase ([www.education.gov.uk/edubase](http://www.education.gov.uk/edubase)). The sample comprised 2,000 state-funded schools and 500 independent schools. This represented a larger sample than in 2012, which had included a total of 2,000 schools of which 1,500 were state-funded and 500 independent. The state-funded sample was selected to be representative by region and performance quintile (based on the average total point score per pupil at Key Stage 4 as published in the 2012 Secondary School Performance Tables) and the independent schools to be representative by region. The sample excluded middle schools and special schools.



In September 2013 an invitation to complete the online questionnaire was sent out to all schools in the sample, addressed to the head of languages in the case of the secondary schools and headteachers in primary schools. Reminder letters were sent to heads of languages and primary headteachers to arrive in schools in the week after half term. In order to allow schools more time to complete the survey, the deadline – initially 31 October – was extended to 16 December 2013, when the term ended for most state schools. As an incentive to complete the questionnaire, two free places were offered at the Association for Language Learning's annual conference, one for a primary school respondent and one for a secondary school. In order to boost the response rate and to achieve a more balanced sample of respondents, a priority list of schools who had not replied was drawn up and these were contacted by telephone and email.

### Responses

A total of 415 state-funded secondary schools, 96 independent secondary schools and 591 primary schools responded to the survey, yielding response rates of 21 per cent, 19 per cent and 20 per cent respectively. These response rates were all somewhat lower than in 2012.<sup>32</sup>

Comparisons of the achieved sample with the national population of schools have been carried out (see Appendix). In the responses from primary schools there is a slight bias towards schools in the mid-high performance quintile and against schools in the lowest performance quintile. The state secondary achieved sample leans slightly towards schools in the South East of England and leans significantly towards schools with lower proportions of pupils eligible for free school meals. The achieved sample of independent schools leans towards schools in the South East, and away from schools in the South West. There is a significant slant towards independent schools in the mid- and higher-performance quintiles and away from independent schools in the lowest quintile for educational performance. This may be because lower-performing independent schools tend to be smaller, often with a particular religious or ideological ethos and it may be, therefore, that many of these that were selected chose not to answer the questionnaire.

The tables for the sample characteristics can be found in the Appendix (page 122).

<sup>32</sup> Although there were under 100 responses from independent schools we have chosen to report the findings as percentages in order to provide comparability with responses from the state sector. However, it should be borne in mind that 1 per cent of independent schools represents slightly less than one school.

# 3

## Schools' examination data in England

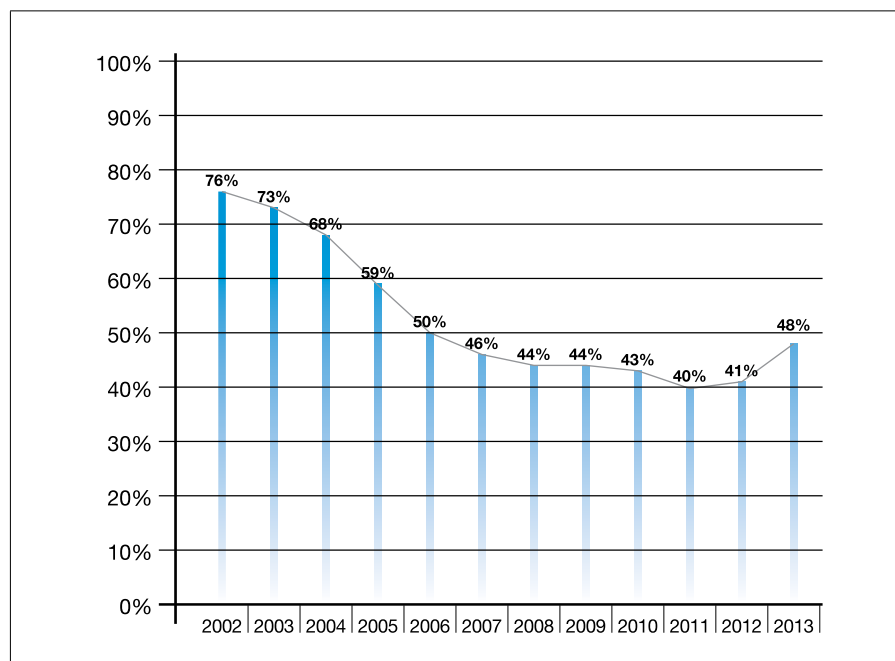
The data summarised below are based on the DfE examination entry figures and cover all GCSE entries for Key Stage 4 pupils and A level entries for 16–18 year olds in English secondary schools and colleges, both state-funded and independent. The latest figures provided are those for the summer examination results 2013, published in January 2014.<sup>33</sup> The time series is updated annually for both GCSE and A level figures from the 1990s onwards.

### 3.1 | GCSE

#### Proportion of pupils sitting a GCSE in a language

There was a seven per cent increase (48 per cent, up from 41 per cent) in the proportion of Key Stage 4 pupils in England sitting a languages GCSE in summer 2013 compared to 2012. Please note, these figures exclude ancient languages.

Figure 1: Percentage of Key Stage 4 pupils in England taking a GCSE in a language, 2002–2013



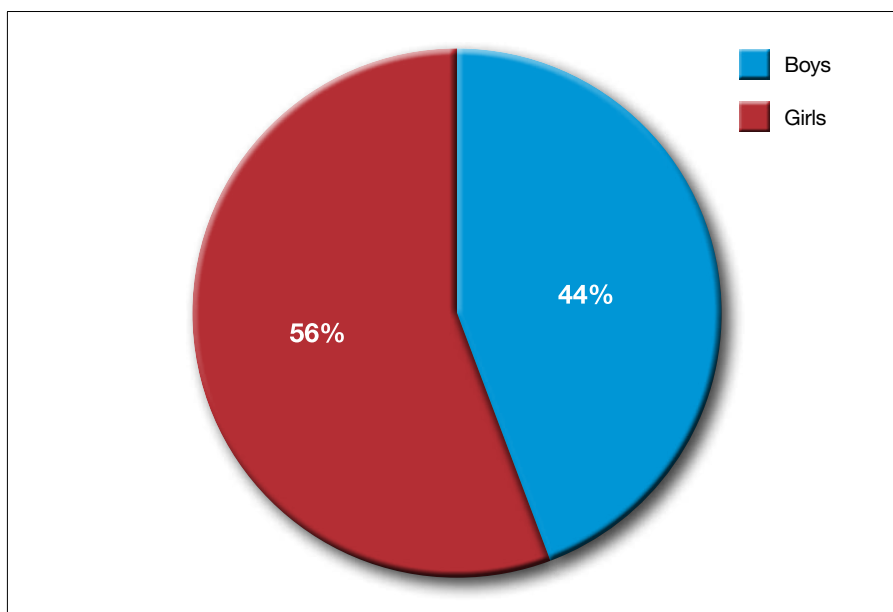
(Source: DfE 2014a and Tinsley & Board 2013)

<sup>33</sup> DfE (2014a); DfE (2014b)

### GCSE language entries by gender

A disproportionately larger number of girls (56 per cent) than boys sat language GCSEs in 2013.

Figure 2: GCSE language entries by gender, 2013



(Source: DfE 2014a)

The predominance of girls in GCSE language entries is most evident for Urdu, for which 63 per cent of entries are from females. The exceptions to this pattern are Polish, where there is a 50/50 share of entries between the genders, and Chinese, for which 52 per cent of entries are from boys (see Table 1).

*Table 1: GCSE entries 2013 by gender*

GCSE entries 2013	% boys	% girls
Chinese	52%	48%
Polish	50%	50%
Other modern languages	48%	52%
German	48%	52%
Any modern language	44%	56%
Arabic	44%	56%
Italian	44%	56%
French	43%	57%
Spanish	43%	57%
Urdu	37%	63%

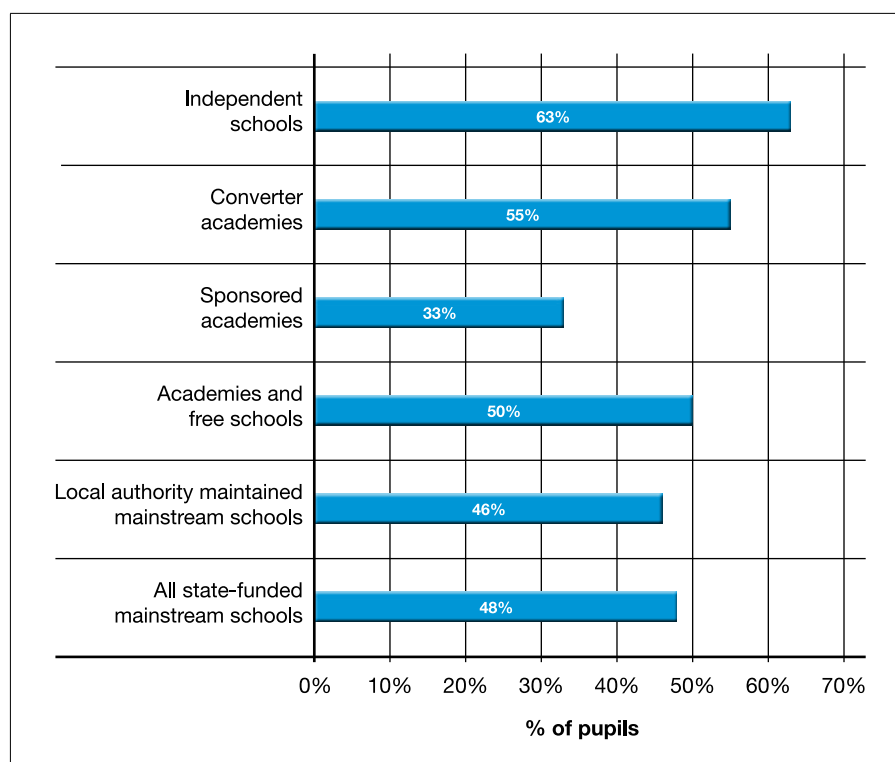
(Source: DfE 2014a)

### GCSE entries by type of school

Figure 3 shows the percentage uptake of language GCSEs in different types of school and groupings of schools.

The proportion of the cohort sitting a languages GCSE in independent schools (excluding classical subjects and excluding independent special schools) was 63 per cent and in state-funded mainstream schools 48 per cent. However, take-up is considerably lower (33 per cent) in sponsored academies, namely schools which were obliged to take on academy status because they were deemed by the government and the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) to be failing, or schools which were deemed outstanding. Take-up for languages is also lower in the group comprising Free Schools, University Technical Colleges and Studio Schools (not shown). At 55 per cent the rate of take-up in converter academies, namely those outstanding schools which opted to become academies as part of the government's initiative to give schools autonomy from local authorities, is higher than the overall figure for state-funded mainstream schools.

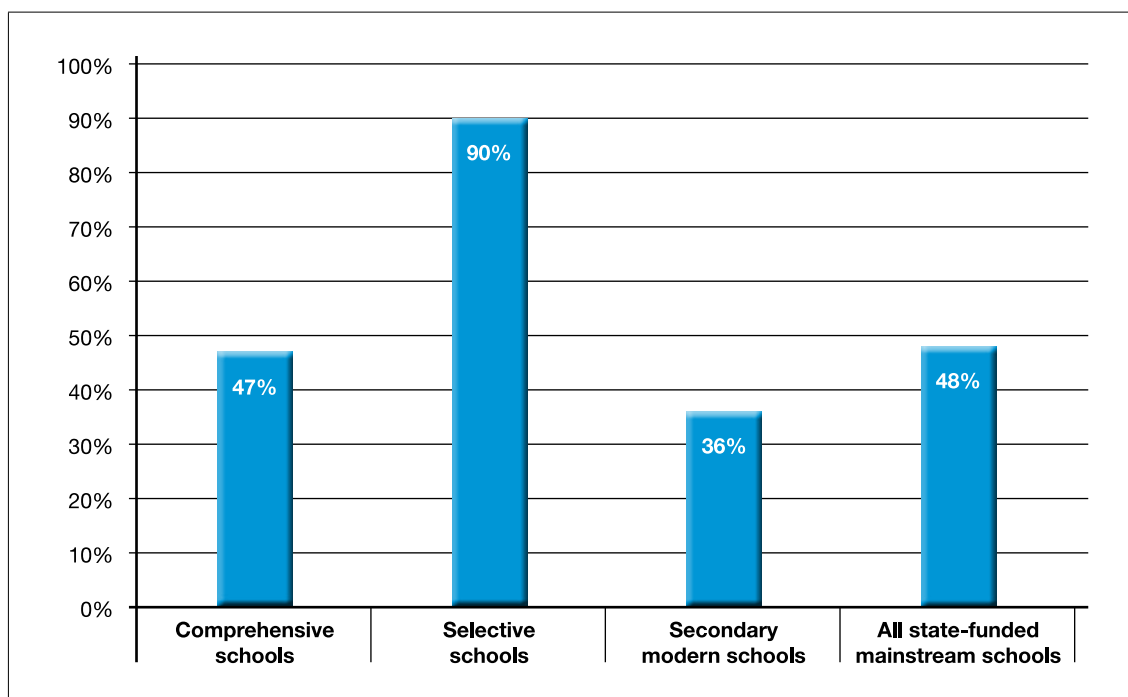
Figure 3: Proportions of Year 11 students taking a language GCSE by type of school



(Source: DfE 2014a)

The DfE has also provided a breakdown of take-up for languages GCSEs by admissions basis (see Figure 4).

*Figure 4: GCSE language entries as a percentage of the cohort by admissions basis (state schools only)*



(Source: DfE 2014a)

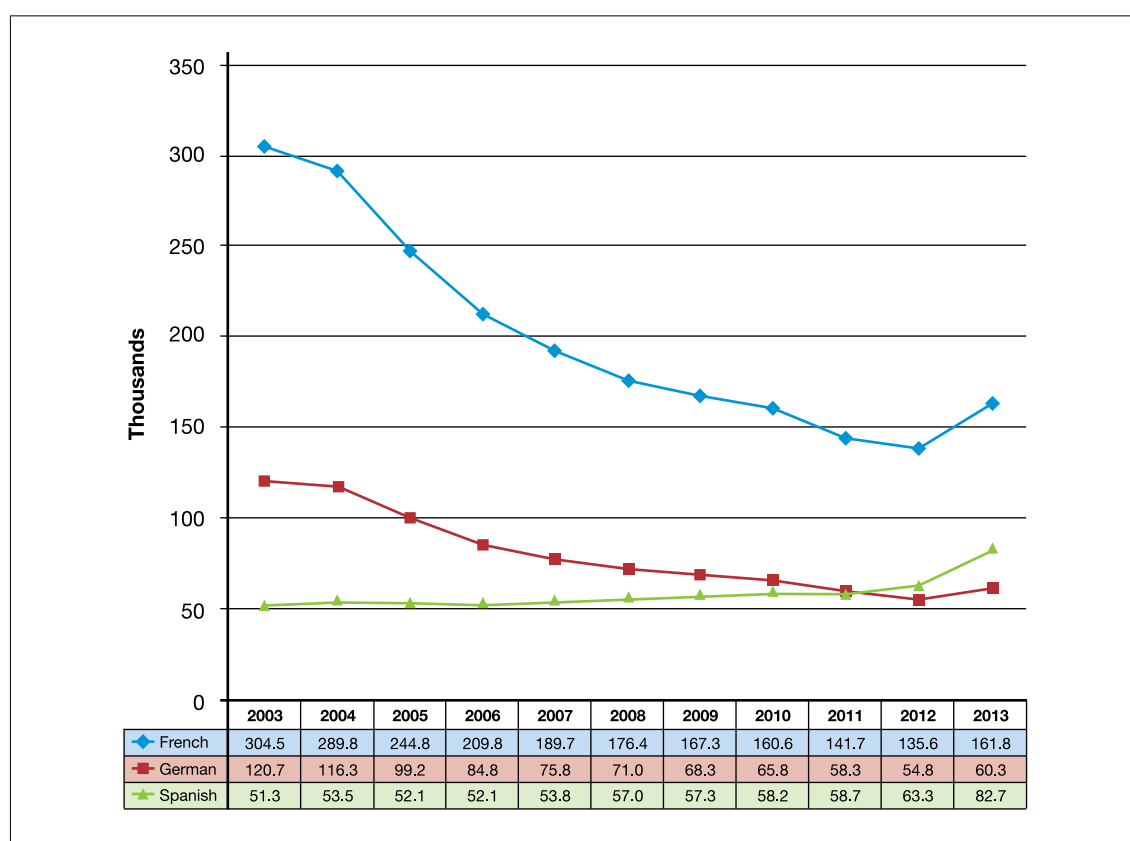
In selective schools (those which select pupils on the basis of different criteria, usually academic) an average 90 per cent of the cohort took a language GCSE in 2013, compared with only 36 per cent in secondary modern schools. This reflects the concentration of language study among pupils deemed to be of high academic ability.



### Trends in take-up for GCSE by language

Entries for French and German rose by 19 per cent and ten per cent respectively between 2012 and 2013, after year-on-year falls in numbers between 2001 and 2012. Entries for Spanish rose by 31 per cent after a period of slow growth from 2006 (see Figure 5).

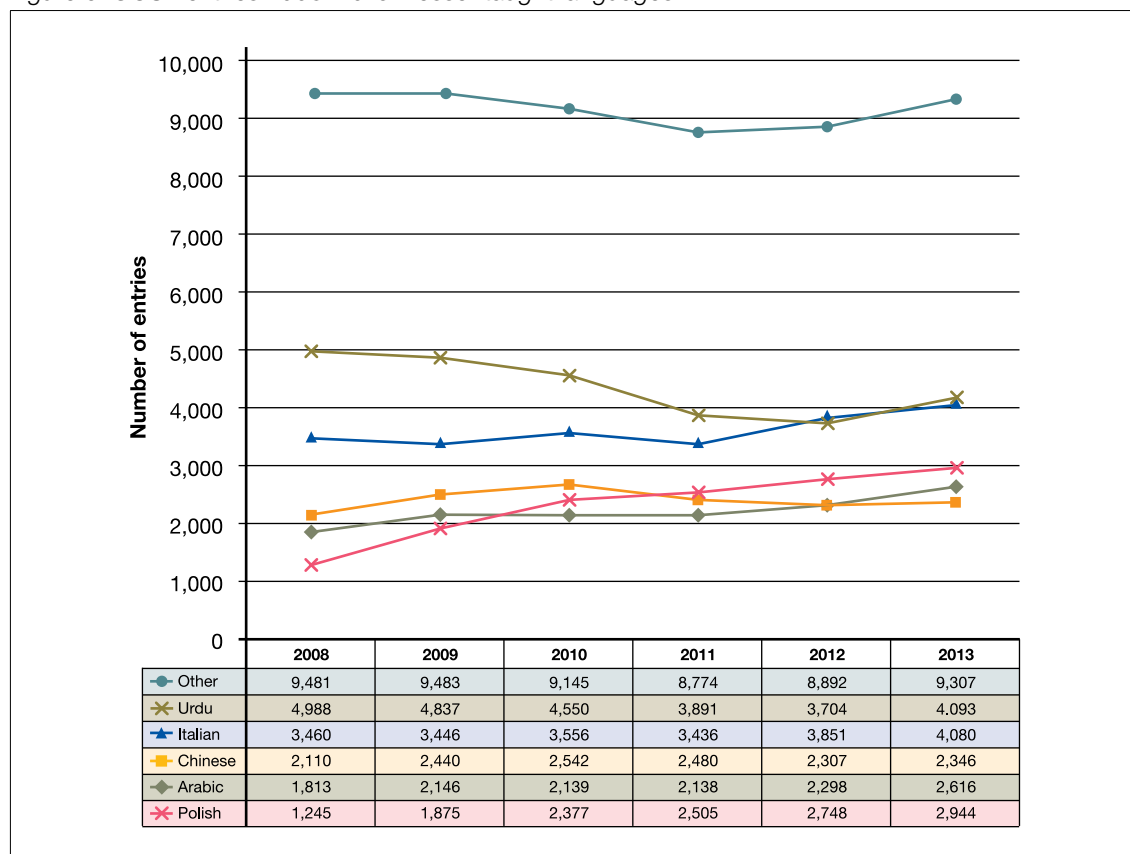
Figure 5: GCSE entries, England, 2003–2013: Main languages taught



(Source: DfE 2014a and Tinsley & Board 2013)

Other languages also saw an increase in GCSE entries between 2012 and 2013, albeit not such significant increases as those enjoyed by French and Spanish (please note, comparable data is not available for previous years).

Figure 6: GCSE entries 2008–2013: Lesser taught languages



(Source: DfE 2014a and Tinsley & Board 2013)

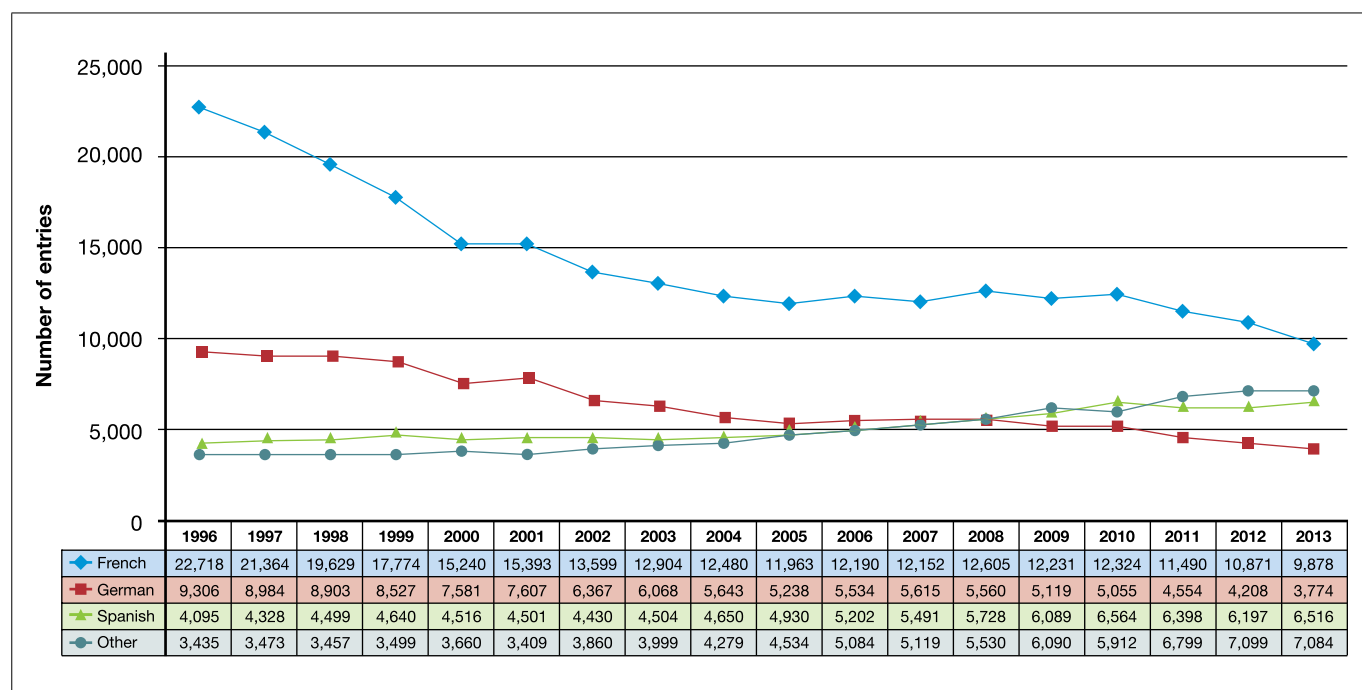
\*Other (modern foreign) languages available at GCSE are Russian, Portuguese, Turkish, Bengali, Japanese, Panjabi, Gujarati, Persian, Dutch, Modern Greek and Modern Hebrew.

### 3.2 | A level

The picture for A level is very different from that at GCSE. Both French and German have seen very serious declines in numbers at A level since the mid-1990s – drops of 57 per cent and 59 per cent respectively. However, over the same period entries for Spanish have increased by 59 per cent and those for other languages by more than 100 per cent. Between 2012 and 2013, French and German again saw significant falls in numbers – of nine per cent in the case of French and ten per cent in the case of German. Spanish grew by five per cent and the number of entries for other languages remained constant.

The increases in entries for Spanish and other languages have not kept pace with the decreases for French and German, resulting in a 31 per cent overall drop in language entries between 1996 and 2013, and a four per cent drop in entries between 2012 and 2013.

Figure 7: Entries for A level languages examinations, 1996–2013



(Source: DfE 2014b and Tinsley & Board 2013)

### Share of A level entries by region – state-funded sector only

Language study at A level varies considerably from one region to another. A total of 41 per cent of entries for A level language subjects come from London and the South East of England and only three per cent from the North East. However, the North East only supplies four per cent of A level entries across all subjects, so the shortfall for languages is not as great as it seems. Compared to the number of A level entries across all subjects, London supplies a disproportionately high share of language entries.

Table 2: Share of A level entries by region (state-funded sector)

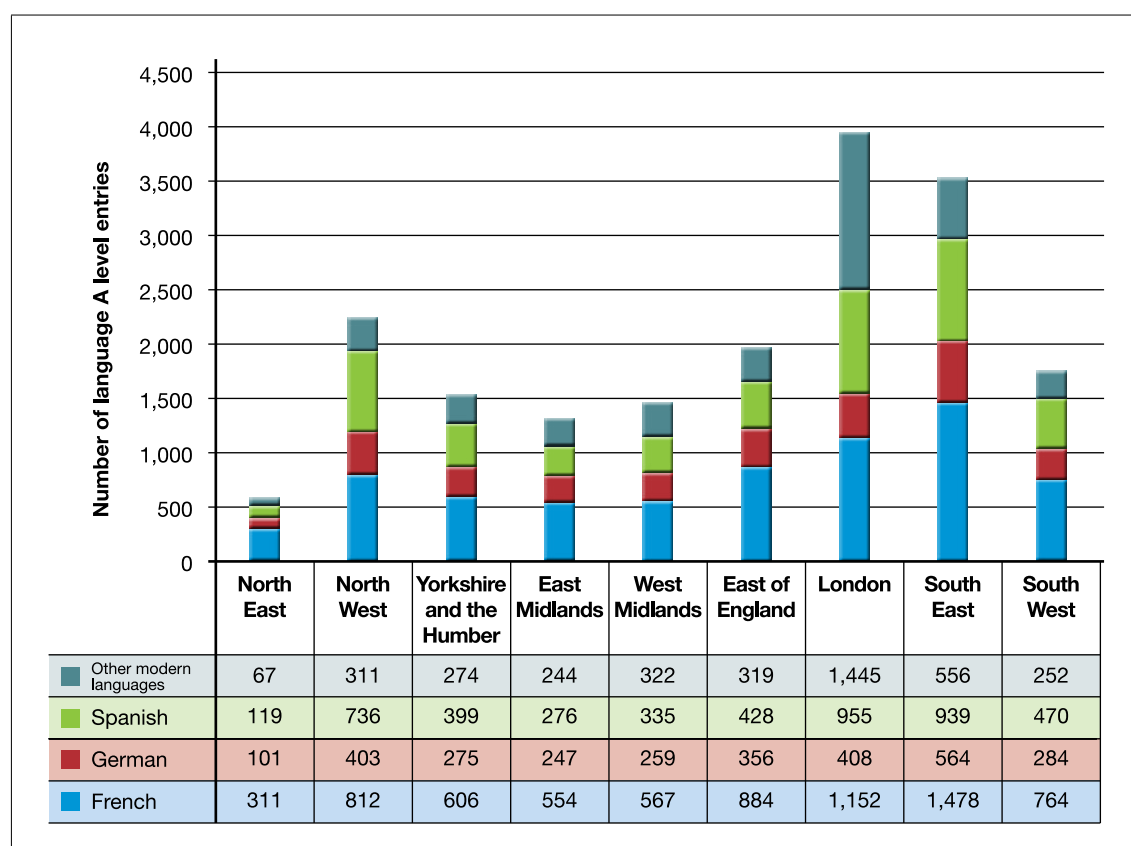
A level	North East	North West	Yorks & Humber	East Midlands	West Midlands	East	London	South East	South West
Share of language entries	3%	12%	8%	7%	8%	11%	22%	19%	10%
Share of all entries	4%	14%	9%	8%	10%	12%	15%	18%	10%
Difference	-1	-2	-1	-1	-2	-1	+7	+1	=

(Source: DfE 2014b)

As Table 2 shows, it is in the West Midlands and the North West where the shortfall between the proportion of language entries and the proportion of entries across all subjects is greatest.

The comparatively high number of A level language entries in London (which is especially evident in Inner London)<sup>34</sup> is due to the larger number and proportion of entries in languages other than French, German and Spanish, as is shown in Figure 8, below.

Figure 8: Regional distribution of A level entries by language, 2013



(Source: DfE 2014b and Tinsley & Board 2013)

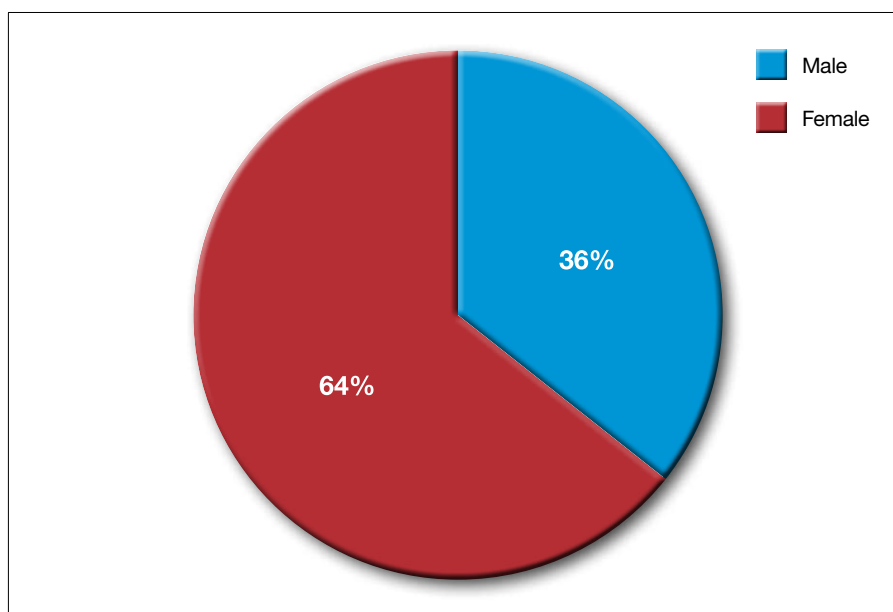
<sup>34</sup> Inner London supplies four per cent of all A level entries, but eight per cent of A level language entries.

In London, 1,445 out of a total of 3,960 A level language entries (36 per cent) were for 'other modern languages', whereas for other regions the proportion is much lower. In the North East just 67 entries for A level languages were in languages other than French, German and Spanish, 11 per cent of total language entries. There is a clear correlation here with the very high proportion of pupils attending London secondary schools who have English as an Additional Language, 49 per cent compared with 14 per cent across England as a whole.<sup>35</sup>

#### A level language entries by gender

The gender bias seen in GCSE entries is even more marked at A level, with nearly two thirds of A level language entries coming from female students:

Figure 9: A level language entries by gender, 2013



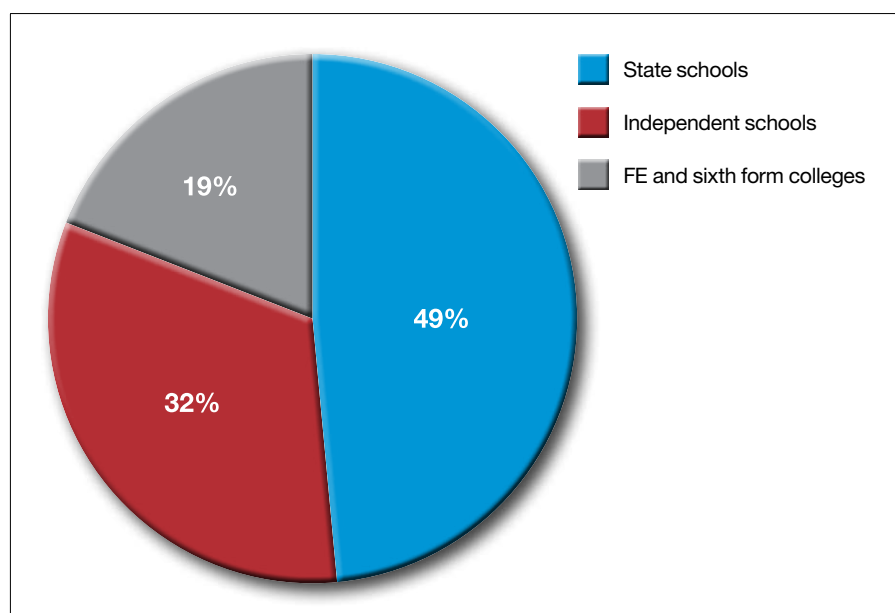
(Source: DfE 2014b)

<sup>35</sup> DfE (2013c)

### A level language entries by type of institution

Fewer than half of A level language entries from 16 to 18 year olds come from state schools. Around one third come from the independent sector and 19 per cent from the Further Education (FE)/Sixth Form College sector.<sup>36</sup> Around 18 per cent of the post-16 school population attend independent schools; however, the sector accounted for 32 per cent of A level entries from this age group in 2013.

Figure 10: A level language entries by type of institution 2013



(DfE 2014b)

Comparing these proportions with A level language entry figures supplied by the DfE for 2012 shows that the proportion supplied by the independent sector has dropped by one percentage point, and that supplied by state schools has increased by one percentage point.

### A level entries by institution and language, 2012–2013

Table 3, below, shows that the fall in A level language entries between 2012 and 2013 was more severe in the independent sector than in state schools or the further education (FE) sector. It shows that while French and German were the languages which saw the most serious declines, this was more marked in the independent sector than in the state-funded sector. While Spanish continued to increase in the state-funded sector (both schools and FE/sixth form colleges), entries declined by five per cent in independent schools. Entries for other foreign languages have remained stable overall in both state and independent schools, but declined slightly in FE/sixth form colleges.

<sup>36</sup> A survey published in 2011 showed that the bulk of language provision in this sector is delivered by sixth form colleges or FE colleges with sixth forms. *Language learning in the FE sector*, CfBT Education Trust, 2011.



Table 3: A level entries by institution and language 2012–2013

	2012	2013	Difference
<b>State-funded</b>			
French	5,670	5,210	–8%
German	2,382	2,169	–9%
Spanish	2,845	3,179	+12%
Other modern languages	2,672	2,673	
<b>Total state-funded</b>	<b>13,569</b>	<b>13,231</b>	<b>–2%</b>
<b>Independent</b>			
French	3,163	2,750	–13%
German	1,021	877	–14%
Spanish	1,949	1,859	–5%
Other modern languages	3,297	3,294	
<b>Total independent</b>	<b>9,430</b>	<b>8,780</b>	<b>–7%</b>
<b>FE and sixth form colleges</b>			
French	2,038	1,918	–6%
German	805	728	–10%
Spanish	1,404	1,478	+5%
Other modern languages	1,130	1,117	–1%
<b>Total FE and sixth form colleges</b>	<b>5,377</b>	<b>5,241</b>	<b>–3%</b>

(Source: DfE 2014b)

# 4

## Language teaching in primary schools

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The situation of languages in primary schools was included in the Language Trends survey for the first time in 2012, when it was clear that the government would make languages a compulsory part of the curriculum for all Key Stage 2 pupils from September 2014. It is invaluable, therefore, to explore the challenges schools face at this important time and to look at what is being achieved as teachers and school leaders prepare for this major change in primary phase education.

### 4.1 | Extent of provision

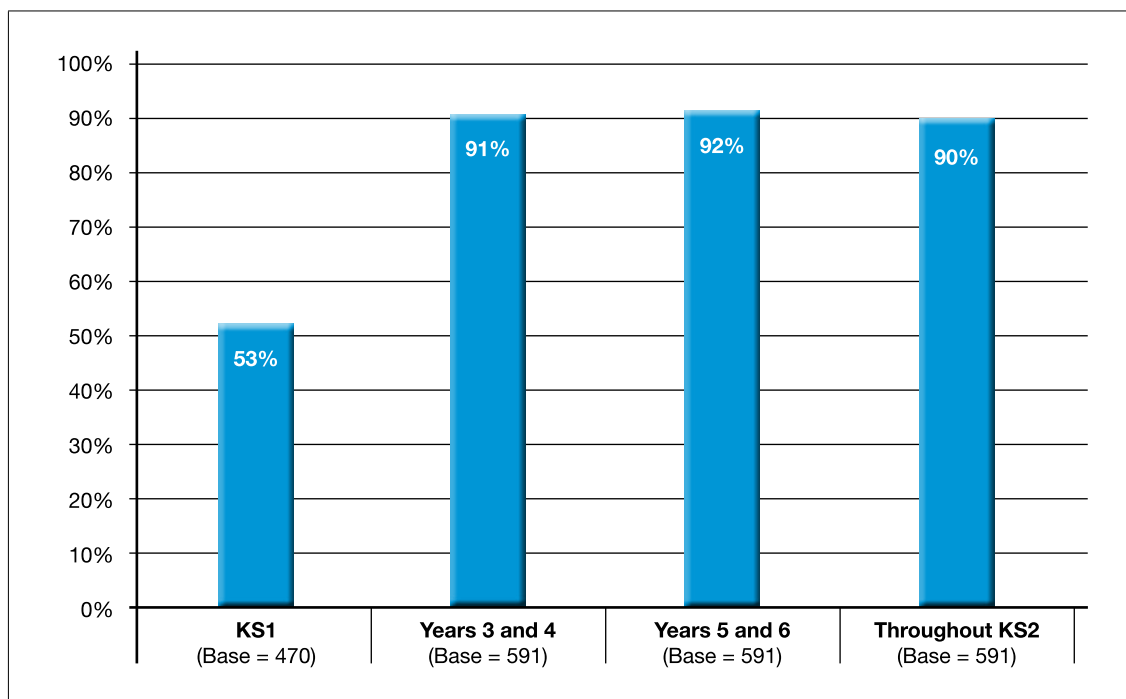
The percentage of primary schools reporting in 2013 that they teach a language within the curriculum is 95 per cent, a figure which is very similar to the 97 per cent who answered likewise in the 2012 survey.

As with the 2012 survey, there is reason to believe that the sample of responding schools saying they teach a language may not be an accurate reflection of primary schools nationally, because schools which teach a language may have been more likely to respond. Caution also needs to be applied in interpreting what ‘the opportunity to learn a foreign language’ means in practice. Evidence from free comments indicates that in some cases this involves only minimal exposure to the language – valuable in its own right but not structured teaching.

The proportion of academies reporting that they do not teach a language (ten per cent) is rather higher than it is for other schools (four per cent). However, academies are not required to adhere to the National Curriculum so they are not obliged to prepare for the introduction of statutory language teaching at Key Stage 2.

As shown in Figure 11, following, a total of 91 per cent of responding schools say they teach at least one language in lower Key Stage 2, and 92 per cent in upper Key Stage 2. Altogether 90 per cent teach a language throughout Key Stage 2, and 53 per cent (not necessarily the same schools) teach a language in Key Stage 1.

Figure 11: Proportion of primary schools teaching at least one language



A total of 29 schools report that they do not teach a language at Key Stage 2, although 17 of them did so in the past. The main reasons for ceasing to teach a language are given as '*other curriculum priorities*' (13 schools) and '*lack of teaching staff*' (eight schools) – the latter was the most common reason given in 2012. Further indications of what these other priorities are appear in the sections on the National Curriculum, below.

Where provision is made for children to learn a language, in the vast majority of cases (96 per cent) this involves all children in the year group.

#### Do schools offer pupils the opportunity to learn a language outside class time?

Some seven out of the 29 schools which do not offer language teaching within the curriculum say they offer pupils the opportunity to learn a new language in an extra-curricular language club, and one offers opportunities for children to learn their heritage languages outside of school time. However, most schools which do not teach a language within the curriculum do not offer any extra-curricular language teaching either, and it is more common for schools that offer language teaching within the curriculum also to offer language clubs for children to learn an additional new language.

Table 4: Pupil opportunities to learn a language outside class time

	Schools which teach a language within the curriculum (531)		Schools which do not teach a language within the curriculum (26) <sup>37</sup>	
Yes, we offer language clubs for children to learn a new language	193	36%	7	27%
Yes, we offer opportunities for children to learn their heritage language(s)	7	1%	1	4%
No, we do not offer any extra-curricular language learning	337	64%	18	69%

## 4.2 | Time allocation

### On average over the school year, how many minutes per week are provided for teaching languages?

A small majority (56 per cent) of schools teaching a language in Key Stage 1 do so for less than 30 minutes each week, whereas the majority of schools teaching a language in Key Stage 2 do so for between 30 and 45 minutes per week. Only a small proportion of schools offer more than one hour's teaching per week, and none offer more than two hours.

Table 5: Time allocation for teaching languages

	Less than 30 minutes		30–45 minutes		Between 45 minutes and 1 hour		Between 1 and 2 hours	
Key Stage 1	164	56%	98	34%	17	6%	12	4%
Years 3/4	53	10%	298	56%	140	26%	42	8%
Years 5/6	45	8%	272	51%	160	30%	62	12%

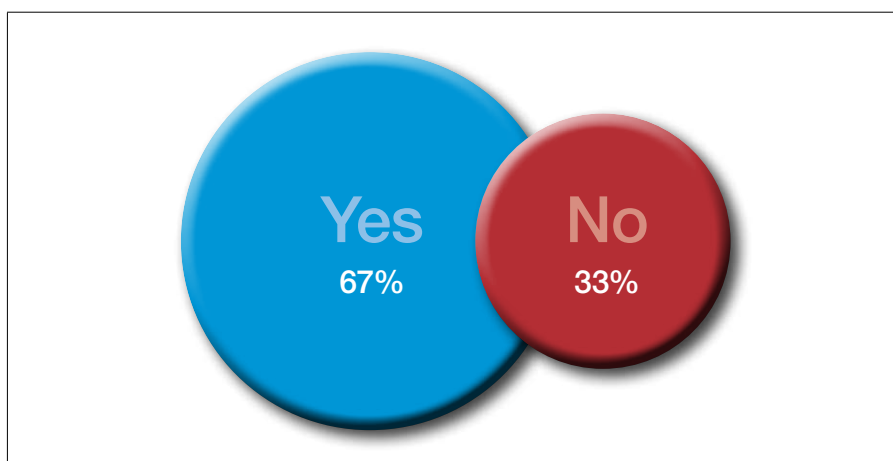
Free comments provided by respondents show that the time made available in the curriculum for language teaching in Key Stages 1 and 2 varies from as little as 15 minutes to as much as 80 minutes per week.

<sup>37</sup> Three of the schools which do not teach a language did not answer this question. Note that the actual numbers are very low and we have provided percentages for indicative purposes only.

#### 4.3 | Documentation, monitoring and assessment

##### Does your school monitor or assess language teaching?

A total of 33 per cent of primary schools say they do not monitor or assess pupil learning or progression. This figure is exactly the same as that received in response to this question in last year's survey.



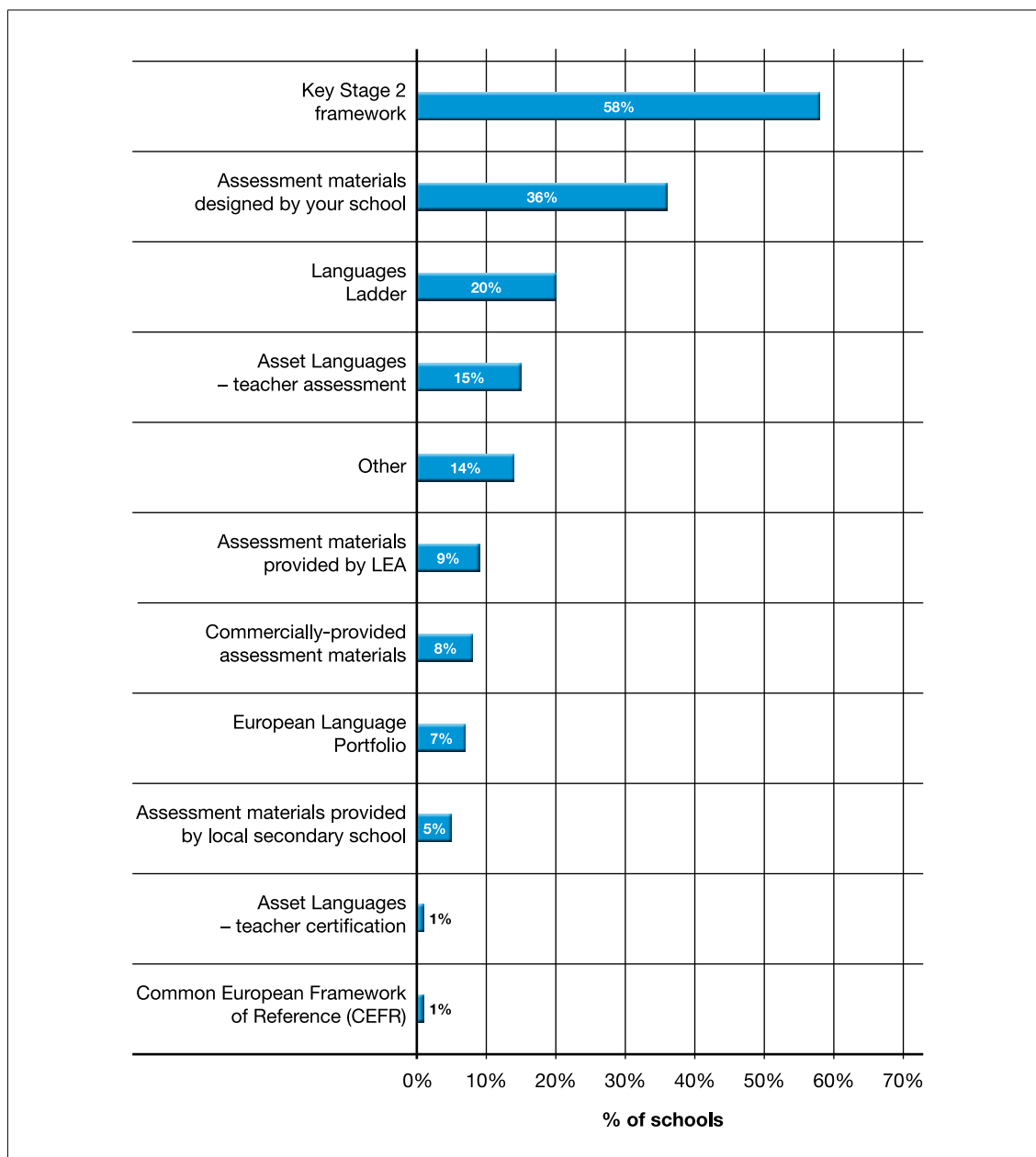
The characteristics of schools which say they did not monitor or assess language learning were analysed and it was found that such schools are more likely to be in the upper quintile for numbers of pupils eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) (40 per cent) and also more likely to be in the smallest quintile for size of school (40 per cent). Schools in Yorkshire and the Humber and in the South West of England are more likely to say they do not monitor or assess pupils' work (45 per cent and 43 per cent respectively).

##### How do schools monitor and assess language learning?

A small majority (58 per cent) of primary schools say they use the Key Stage 2 Framework,<sup>38</sup> which is a significant increase on the number of schools (39 per cent) who reported using it last year. The reason for the increase is likely to be the need for guidance material in the run-up to languages becoming compulsory. Those schools which do monitor or assess their language teaching also report using a wide range of both commercially available products and locally produced material. A total of 20 per cent of schools report using the Languages Ladder, of which around half (35 out of 74) say they also use the Key Stage 2 Framework (the two are linked).

<sup>38</sup> The Key Stage 2 Framework for Languages was published by the (then) Department for Education and Skills (DfES) in 2005 as a core reference for teachers and curriculum managers in supporting the introduction of language learning in Key Stage 2 as envisaged in the National Languages Strategy of 2002.

Figure 12: Tools used for monitoring and assessing progress in language learning\*

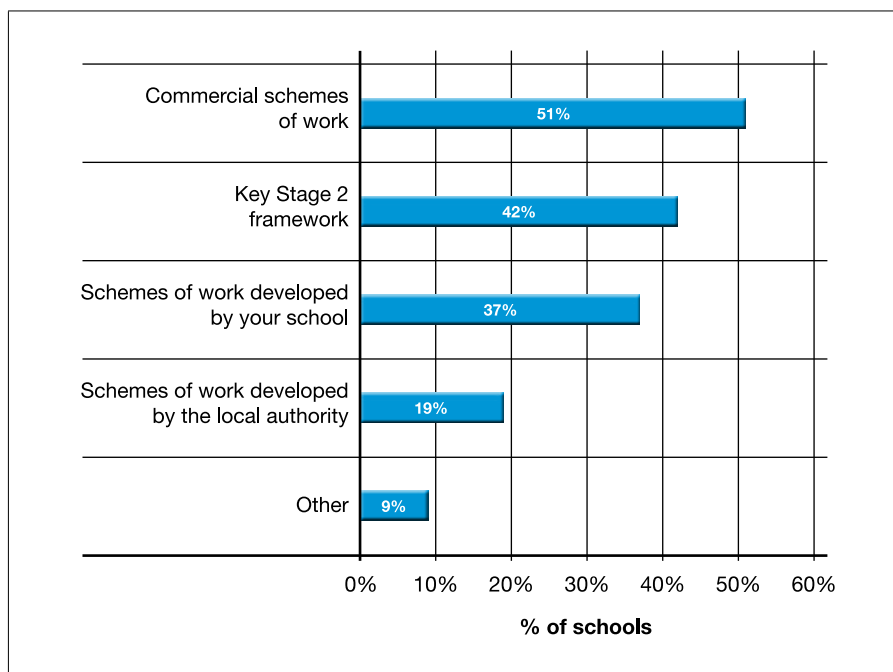


\*Multiple responses permitted

#### What documentation underpins schools' primary languages programmes?

Some 42 per cent of teachers say that they use the Key Stage 2 Framework to underpin their primary languages programme. This is a very slight reduction from 2012, when 45 per cent reported using the Key Stage 2 Framework, and appears anomalous given the increase in schools reporting that they use this document for monitoring and assessment purposes.

Figure 13: Documentation underpinning primary languages programmes\*



\*Multiple responses permitted

Most schools are using a variety of commercially available products to support them with the monitoring and assessment of progress. This year's responses show an increase in the number of schools using their own schemes of work – the question was phrased slightly differently in 2012 when 31 per cent said they were using 'schemes of work developed by their school or local authority'.

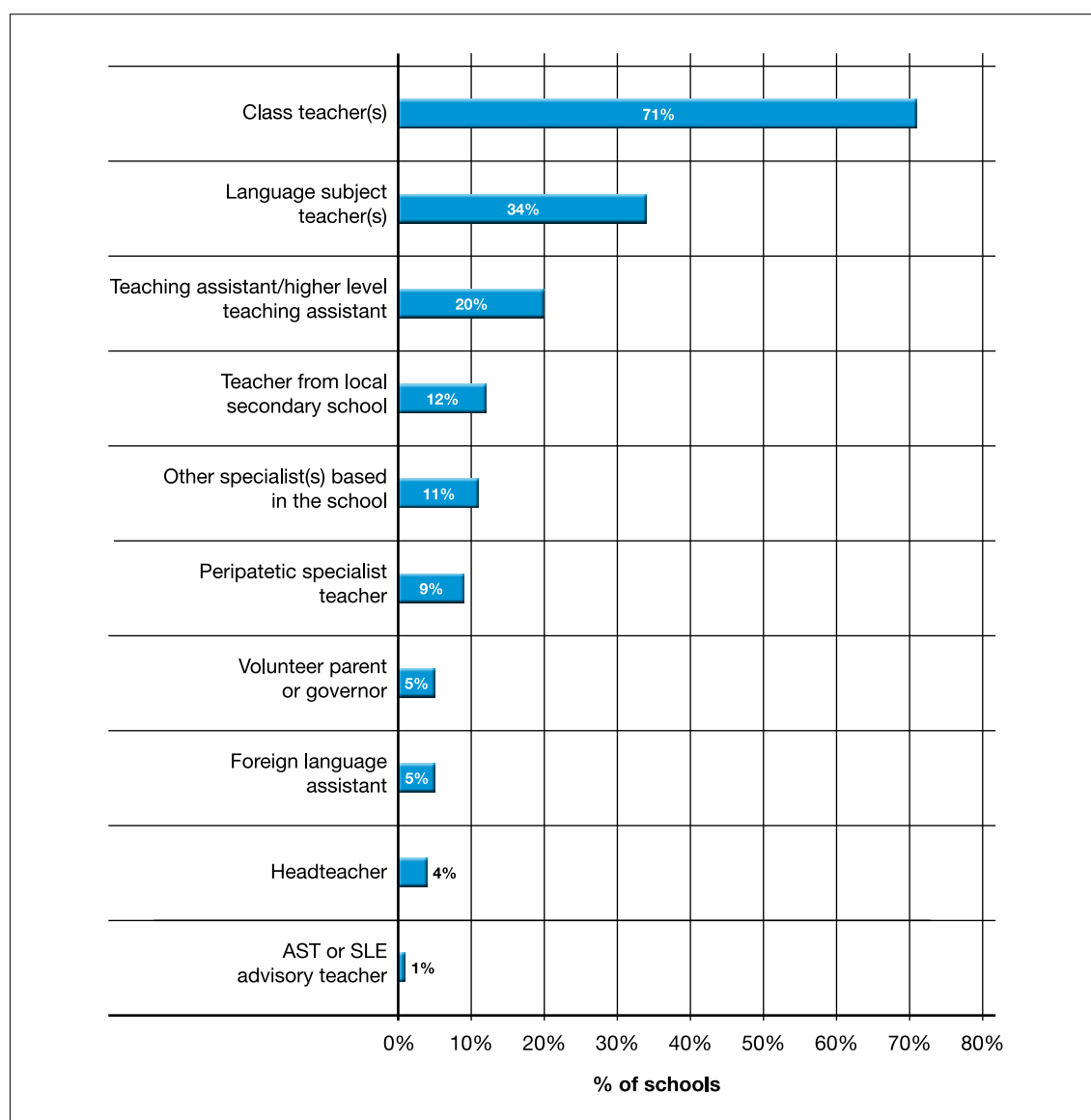


#### 4.4 | Teachers' qualifications and confidence levels

##### Who currently provides the teaching of languages?

Respondents were asked to identify the status of staff who mainly or occasionally provide languages instruction to pupils in Key Stage 2. As the chart above shows, primary class teachers bear the main responsibility for teaching the foreign language in the majority of schools, although a wide range of other individuals are also involved. In total 55 per cent of responding schools say that the class teacher is 'mainly' responsible for language teaching and 29 per cent have a languages subject teacher who is 'mainly' responsible for this role (not shown).

Figure 14: Status of staff currently providing the teaching of languages either 'mainly' or 'occasionally'\*



\*Multiple responses permitted

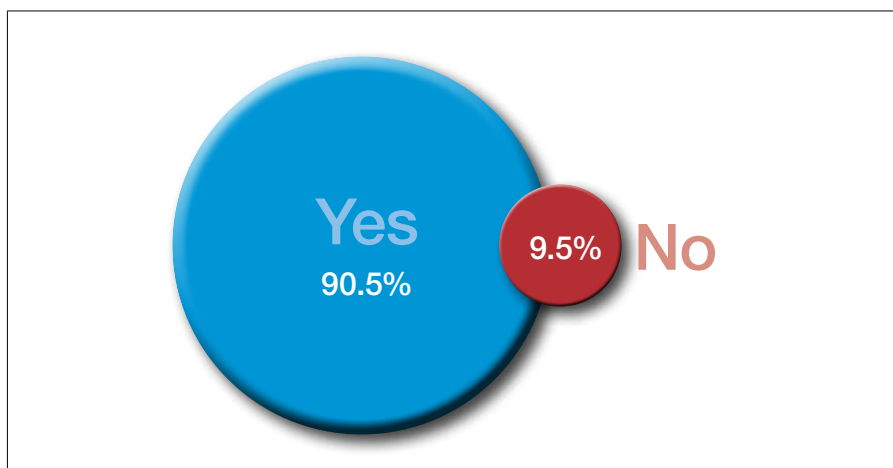
Although the question was asked slightly differently in 2012, this proportion seems to have increased. In 2012, 22 per cent of respondents said that teaching was done by 'language subject teachers', 9 per cent said it was done by 'other specialists based within the school' and nine per cent said it was done by a 'peripatetic specialist teacher'.

While the role of the specialist teacher may simply be to teach the language to pupils in different year groups in regular weekly sessions, the free comments also provide evidence of specialist teachers working in conjunction with classroom teachers. For example, one school reports that they use: *'a specialist teacher of Modern Foreign Languages (MFL) (French/Spanish) and Latin to deliver lessons. Language units are recycled by class teachers and a specialist during the week.'*

Some 20 per cent of schools report that they use teaching assistants and five per cent foreign language assistants to support their teaching of a language at Key Stage 2, for example, *'the teaching assistant who delivers all the MFL lessons speaks Italian and French'*. A small number use volunteer parents or school governors. In some cases the teaching assistant appears to have a responsibility for teaching the language to the class and sometimes it is in conjunction with classroom teachers. The free comments in our survey also reveal that some schools make use of pupils from local secondary schools.

#### Do any of the staff teaching languages have qualifications of GCSE level or above in the language they are teaching?

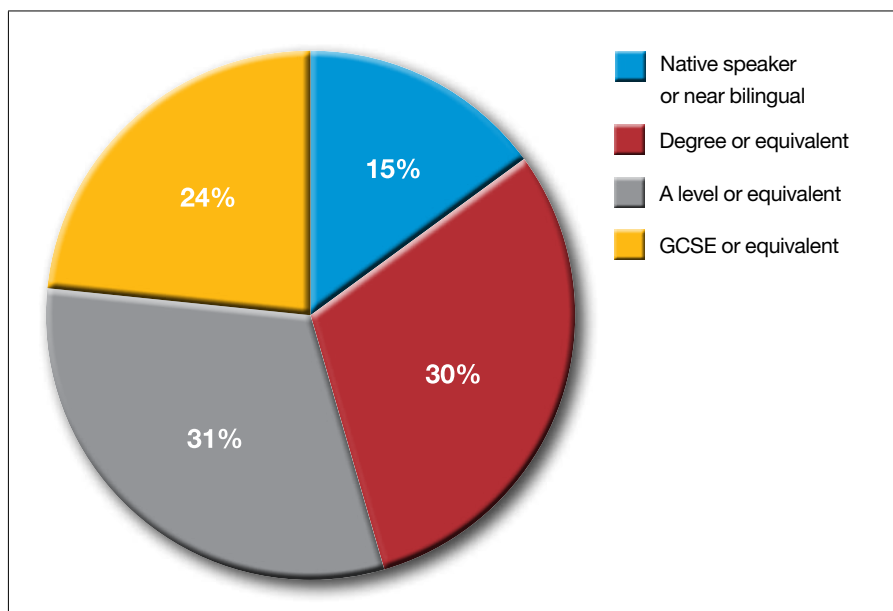
Nine out of ten primary schools say they have staff with at least a GCSE in the language they are teaching:



#### What is the highest level of qualification held by teachers in your school in the language they are teaching?

In common with the picture revealed by last year's survey, GCSE is the highest qualification in 23 per cent of schools. While 31 per cent have teachers with an A level in a foreign language, some 30 per cent of schools report that they have a teacher with a degree in a foreign language; this represents a smaller proportion than last year when the same question showed 40 per cent of schools with a teacher with such a qualification. A total of 15 per cent of schools say that they have bilingual or native speaker staff to provide language teaching at Key Stage 2, although these include staff working as teaching assistants and foreign language assistants.

Figure 15: Highest qualification held by teachers in responding schools



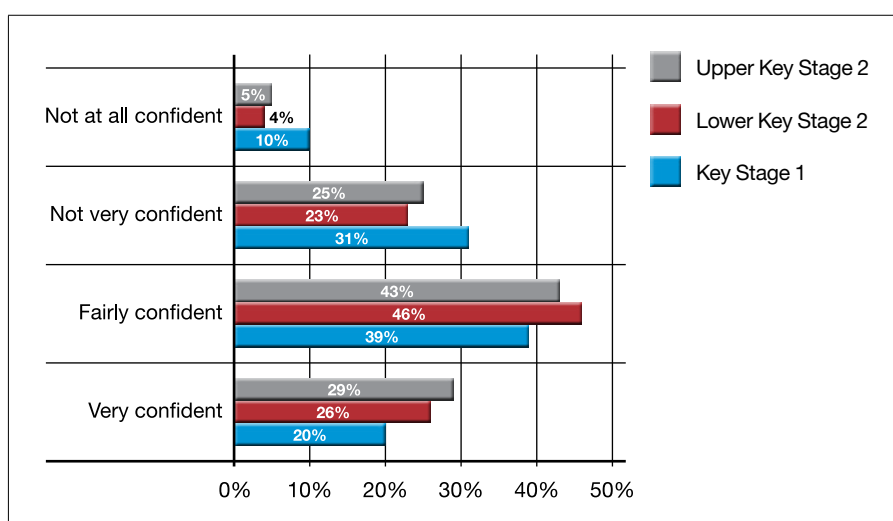
#### Does your school have a subject leader for languages?

It is encouraging to note that in the 2013/14 survey, 87 per cent of schools report that they have a nominated subject leader for languages. In the 2012 survey 79 per cent of schools had such a post in place.

#### How confident do respondents think their colleagues are in teaching languages?

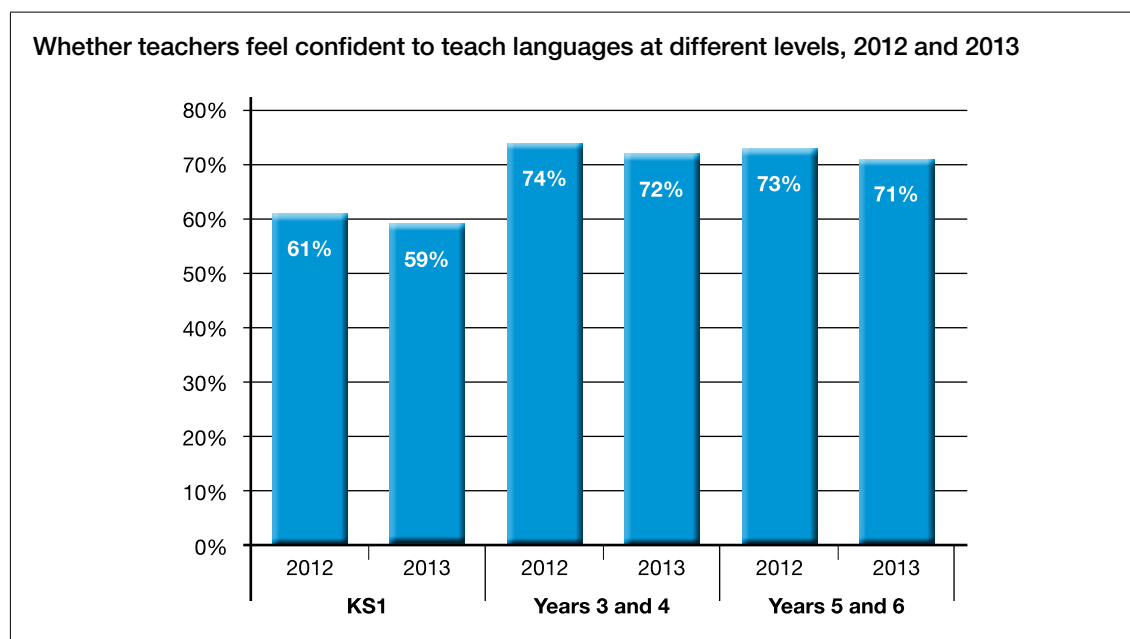
The highest teacher confidence levels reported are for lower Key Stage 2 (Years 3 and 4) and the lowest for Key Stage 1.

Figure 16: Teaching staff confidence in teaching languages, as reported by respondents



Levels of teacher confidence to teach a foreign language to their pupils are very similar to those recorded in the 2012 survey, with a slight drop (two per cent) in overall confidence recorded for each key stage/level:

Figure 17: Changes in teaching staff confidence levels, 2012–2013



An analysis of the responses shows that where languages are mainly taught by a languages subject teacher (see Figure 14) reported confidence is higher. However, there is no difference between reported confidence in schools with no specialist languages subject teacher and those where languages subject teachers only occasionally teach languages i.e. where class teachers are doing most of the teaching.

The qualitative data in this survey indicate that the presence of a specialist teacher for languages or someone with a high level of skill in the foreign language, either on the staff or working in a peripatetic capacity, boosts confidence:

*'All of our language teaching... is taught by language specialists who are not main class teachers... class teachers have not been required to teach a foreign language at all. Therefore the majority of our teaching staff would be not very confident or not at all confident.'*

Another respondent comments: *'We are developing confidence through team teaching with a native/degree-level speaker from within the school team.'*

The free comments section to this question of teacher confidence reveals that, in general, teachers are more comfortable with the teaching of songs, single words or short phrases and that confidence levels among classroom teachers drop considerably when it comes to teaching correct pronunciation, grammar, reading and writing. One respondent comments:

*'Most staff feel ill equipped to teach foreign languages. As a teacher you want to feel confident that you know your subject matter well. Rusty O level and only being a page or two ahead of the children is not ideal!'*

Others comment as follows:

*'Teachers are confident on common topics (introducing yourself, birthdays, colours), but less so when it comes to writing complete sentences, and topics such as directions, or describing your home...'*

*'Confidence wanes as the children progress up the school and the level of language learning increases in difficulty.'*

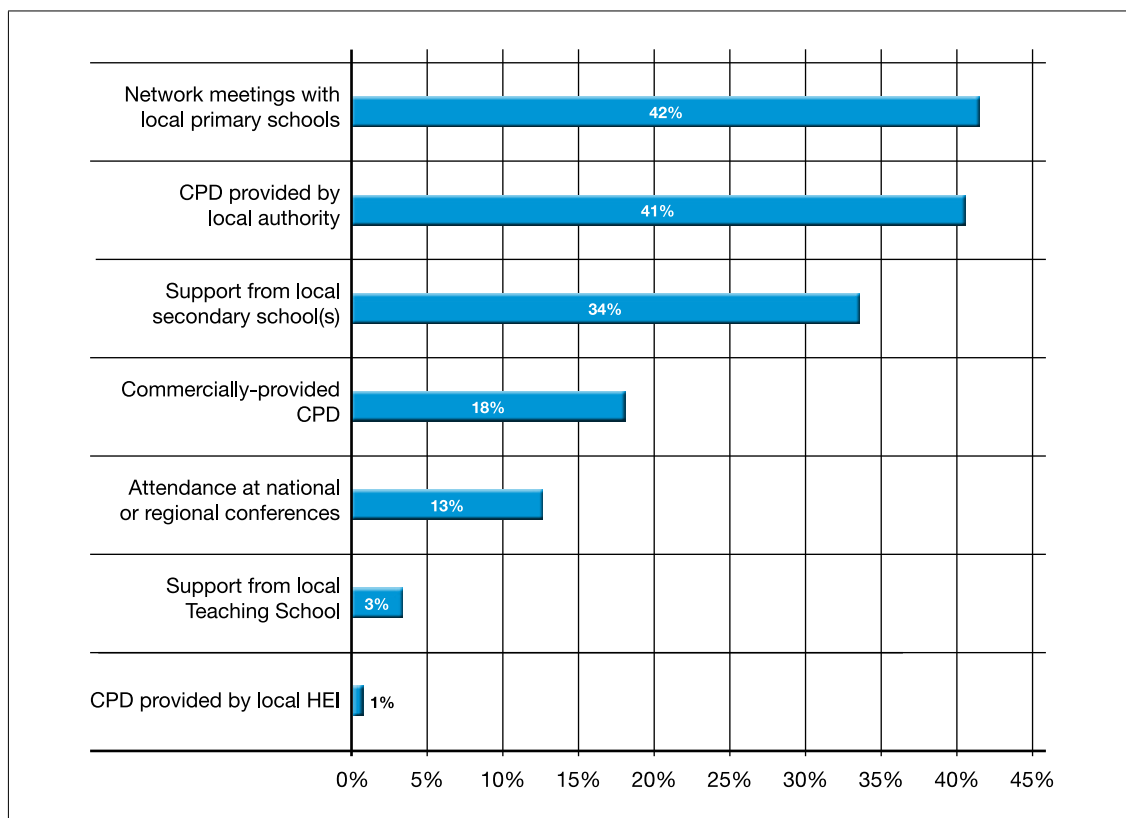
Some schools have resolved the issue of the increasing complexity of language and teachers' weak linguistic skills by providing their pupils with a language awareness programme rather than developing skills in a single language for all or most of Key Stage 2, as now explicitly required in the new National Curriculum:

*'As each year group begins a different language the staff do not need to have an extensive knowledge of the language. We aim for our children to leave school having had experience of lots of languages and having an enthusiasm and love of languages. It works!'*

**What types of CPD for languages do colleagues teaching a language have access to?**

There is a low level of engagement with the potential range of CPD opportunities for teachers of languages: despite being invited to 'tick all that apply' in the question above, 64 per cent of respondents to this question ticked just one of the prompted answers.

Figure 18: Types of CPD for staff teaching languages\*



\*Multiple responses permitted

Additional free comments from teachers on this question cite funding cuts, workload and schools being reluctant to release teachers as reasons why CPD has decreased; for example:

*'In the past there were lots of network meetings, CPD opportunities etc but with the withdrawal of funding in the last couple of years this support has dried up which is a real shame. Schools can't afford to release members of staff to attend training, let alone pay for courses, so no CPD is really happening.'*

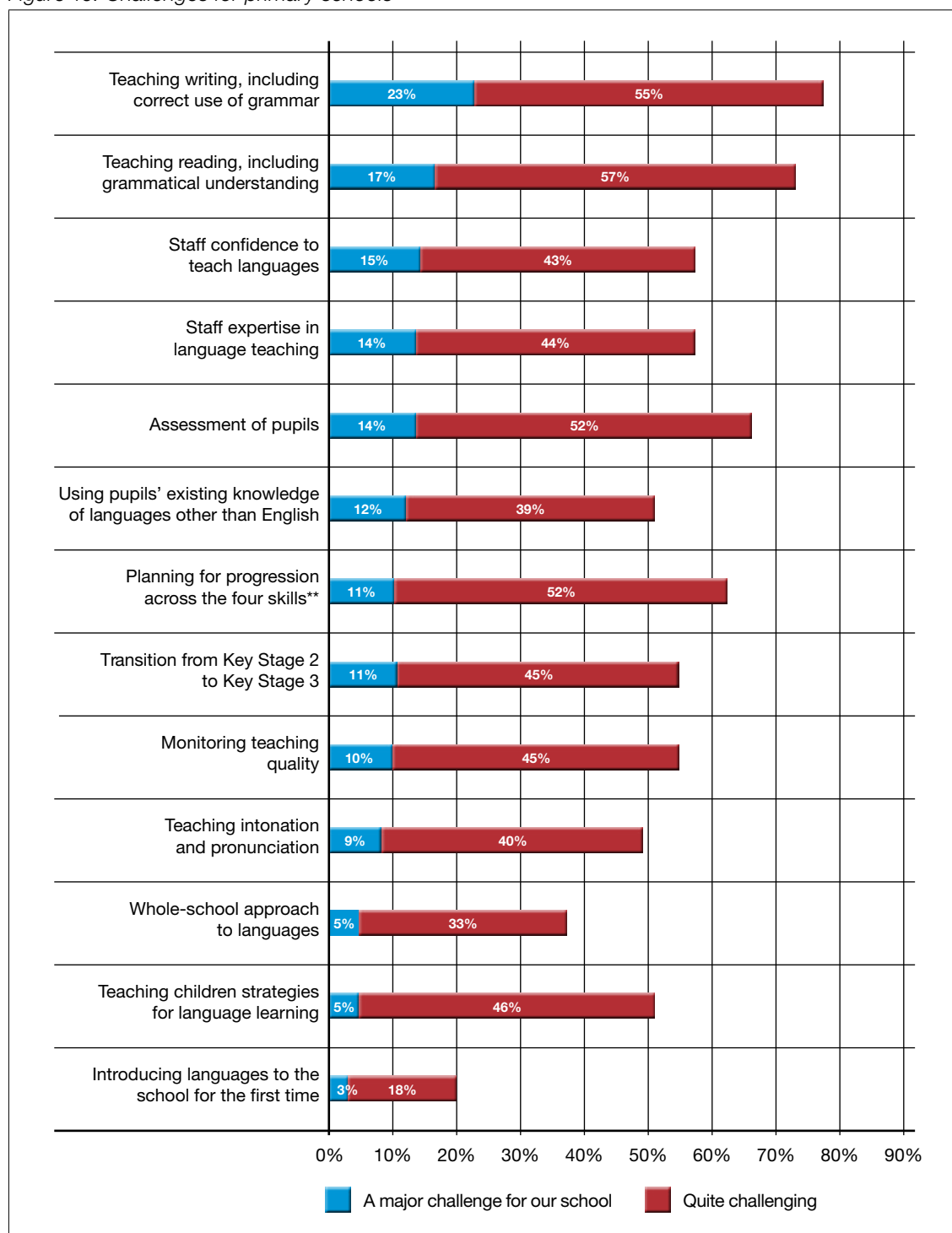
When CPD does take place it tends to be either informal networking events with local schools or internally organised training run by the school itself, for example *'in-house support from language assistant.'*

While many respondents lament the disappearance of local authority organised CPD, a few local authorities are still able to provide this for schools in their area. Very few teachers appear to have access to CPD provided by Teaching Schools (three per cent) or local higher education institutions (HEIs) (one per cent).

#### 4.5 | Challenges in relation to the new National Curriculum

To what extent are the issues identified by Ofsted challenges in the responding schools?

Figure 19: Challenges for primary schools\*



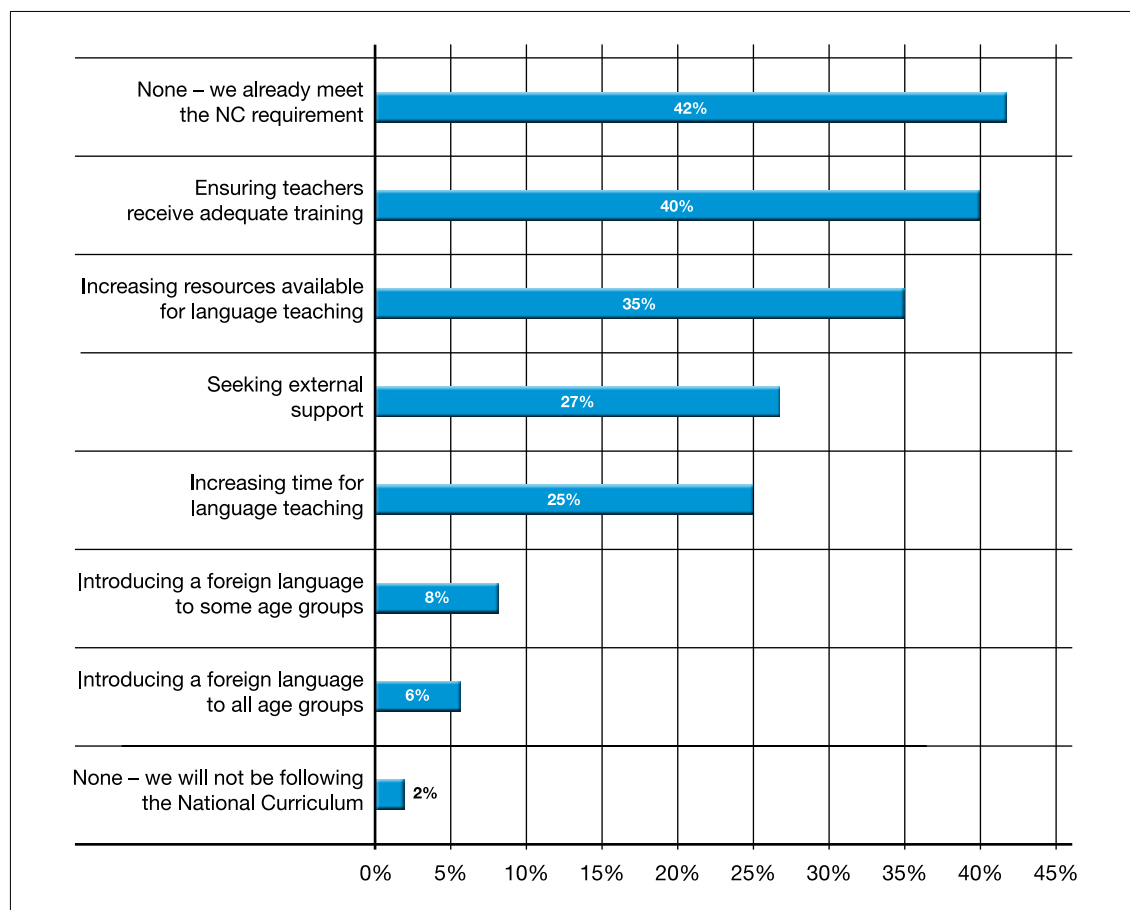
\* Multiple responses permitted

\*\* Reading, writing, speaking and listening

Almost all the issues mentioned in recent Ofsted reports are a challenge for the majority of primary schools. More than 77 per cent say 'teaching writing, including the correct use of grammar' is a major challenge or quite challenging. 'Teaching reading, including grammatical understanding' is the second most challenging issue, cited by more than 73 per cent of schools. The least challenging issues are 'introducing languages to the school for the first time' (21 per cent) and 'whole school approach to languages' (38 per cent). This confirms findings in the 2012 survey that writing, including the correct use of grammar, and reading, including grammatical understanding, were the areas where schools felt least strong, and that pupil assessment was the area highlighted by the greatest number of schools as a priority for improvement.<sup>39</sup>

### What changes do schools plan to make to language provision in order to meet the requirements of the new National Curriculum?

Figure 20: Changes being made to languages teaching provision\*



\*Multiple responses permitted

<sup>39</sup> However, because the questions were phrased differently it is not possible to compare percentages.



There is considerable variety in the responses to this question. Some 42 per cent of respondents say they already meet the National Curriculum requirements, as can be seen, for example, in the very full free comment provided by one respondent:

*'Our school has taken the new National Curriculum on language teaching very seriously and acted in good time to put provision in place... Children receive two half-hour sessions per week in Years 3–5. Years 2 and 6 receive one half hour per week. This gives them frequency of exposure which is crucial to progress in languages. Class teachers learn alongside the children. This gives the subject gravitas within the school and helps to provide role models for the children. There is a whole-school approach to language learning... we plan to conduct assessments of pupil progress on a regular basis. These will be done in accordance with the National Framework for Languages.'*

Others are fearful of how they will meet the requirements of the new National Curriculum:

*'Teachers do not feel they can teach languages without a basic competence in a foreign language. Time is an issue and it is not seen as a priority. Staff are already stretched and under pressure to raise attainment. It is another responsibility and extra work load.'*

Most schools are working hard to put in place what is needed by the new National Curriculum, as can be seen by the following comments from respondents to this survey:

*'We will be continuing to use current units of work which link to the Key Stage 2 Framework for languages, adjusting them where necessary to reflect the new Primary Languages (PL) curriculum.'*

*'We already teach French from F1 to Year 6, but we will have to monitor the planning, teaching and progression much more in Key Stage 2.'*

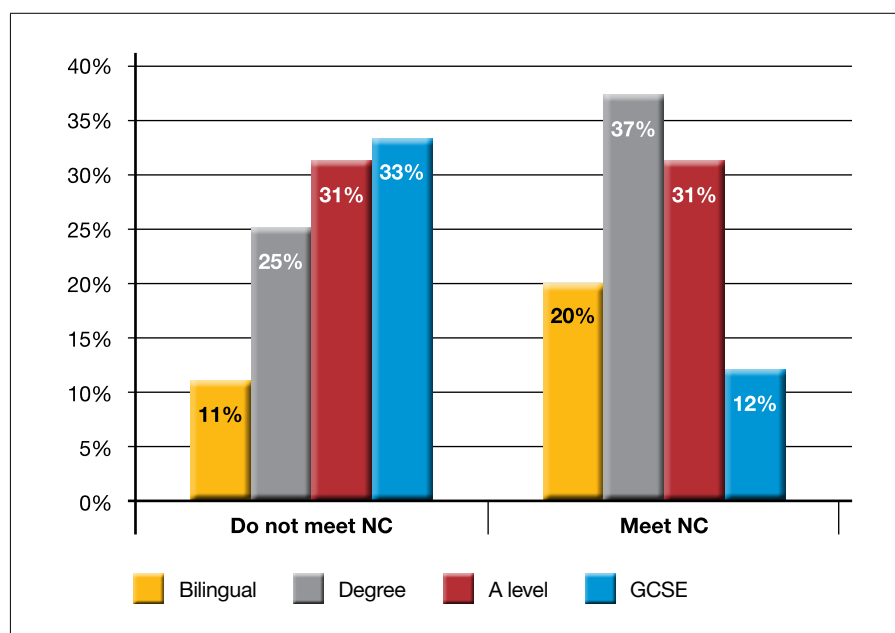
*'We will continue to employ peripatetic staff to deliver our language provision as this has been the most stable option for the delivery of MFL that we have experienced. Strategies that have not been as effective have been whole-staff training, the use of a foreign language assistant, recruitment and retention of key staff and a Service Level Agreement (SLA) with a local high school.'*

Only two per cent of schools (ten respondents) say they will not be following the National Curriculum. Of these, two do not currently teach languages, and give the reasons for this respectively as a lack of teaching staff and the status as English as an Additional Language (EAL) and the poor English skills of nearly all their pupils. In the other eight schools, all children are receiving language teaching and a range of documentation is used, six monitor and assess language teaching, and all have a subject leader for languages. It is unclear therefore, in what ways they do not expect to follow the National Curriculum.

Schools reporting that they already meet the National Curriculum requirement are more likely to monitor and assess language teaching, more likely to have contacts with their local secondary schools, and more likely to have staff with a higher level of language qualification than schools not meeting the requirements. In schools already meeting the requirements, teaching is as likely to be done by a languages specialist teacher as the class teacher, whereas in schools not meeting the requirement, it is more likely to be done by the class teacher.

Schools which meet the National Curriculum requirement are more likely to have bilingual/native-speaker staff or staff with a degree in the language they are teaching, whereas schools not already meeting the National Curriculum language requirement are more likely to have GCSE level as the highest language qualification among their staff teaching languages (analysis based on data shown in Figures 15 and 20).

Figure 21: Highest qualifications of teachers in schools meeting/not meeting the National Curriculum requirement

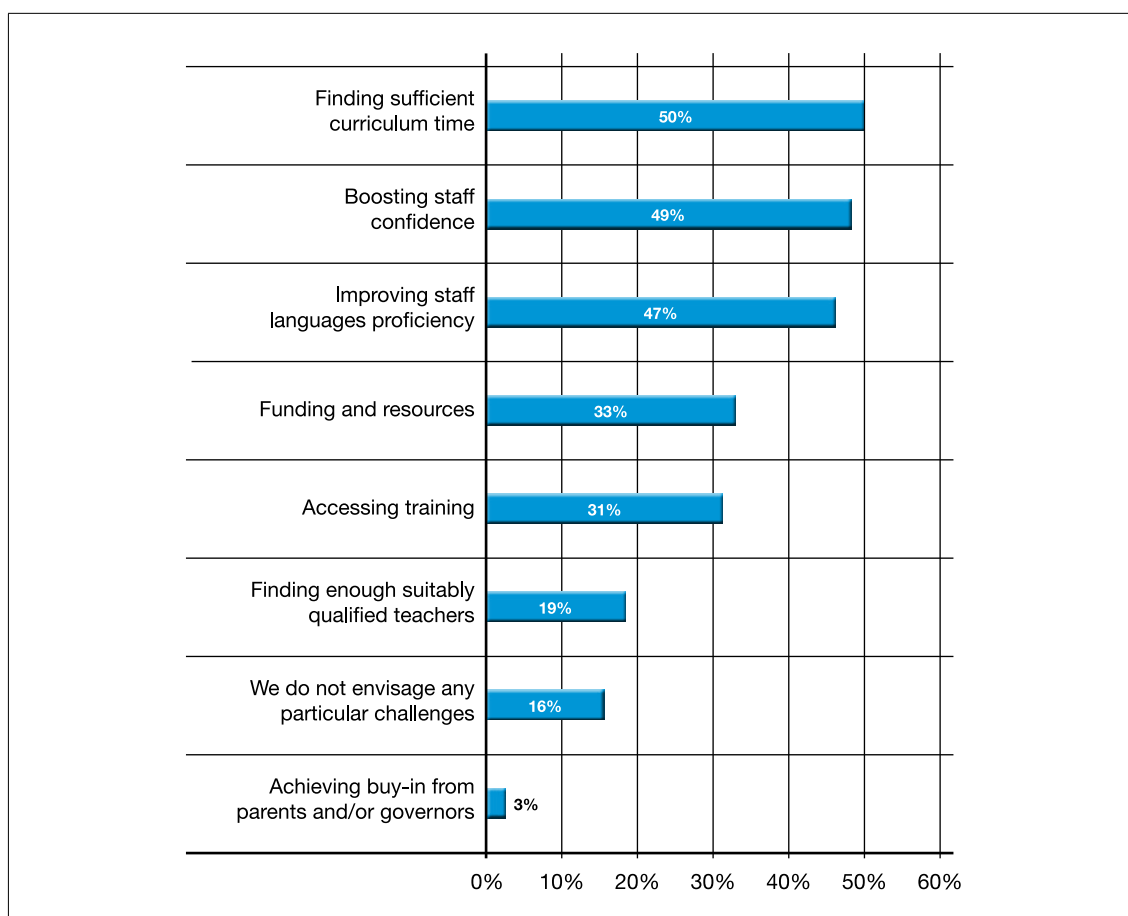


### What will be the main challenges for schools in meeting the National Curriculum requirement?

The main challenge which schools (50 per cent) report in meeting the National Curriculum requirement is finding sufficient curriculum time for languages:

*'... more curriculum time would help to develop the full curriculum. With mixed-age classes, progression is difficult, especially with very little time for single year-group lessons.'*

Figure 22: Main challenges in meeting the National Curriculum requirement\*



\*Multiple responses permitted

In the free comments section to this question, respondents also mention concerns about:

*'The written focus of the new curriculum. Currently we focus on helping our children become confident at speaking and listening in French.'*

and

*'ensuring assessment is in line with government requirement and investigating whether we need a more formal model of assessment...'*

Effective liaison with local secondary schools and transition to Key Stage 3 also continue to be issues for many primary schools. These are dealt with more fully in Chapter 5.

Other issues which score highly are improving teachers' proficiency in languages and boosting staff confidence. From their responses, primary schools do not regard getting buy-in from parents and governors as a problem. A number of schools question the need to teach a language when the vast majority of their pupils are EAL, for example:

*'Our children are predominantly EAL (Urdu, Arabic etc.), where English as a language is not always spoken readily at home. Many of our children have to act as interpreters for their parents when communicating at school and French will be a third language for the majority of our children. Most will have no home support in English and even less in another language.'*

#### **Do schools welcome statutory status for languages in Key Stage 2?**

The vast majority of schools (85 per cent) who took part in this year's survey welcome statutory status for languages:

*'We believe language learning is a vital part of education and have included French in our school curriculum for many years.'*

They see that learning a foreign language will support their pupils' literacy and enhance their employability when they are older, for example:

*'... the children gain so much from it.'*

*'It opens up a whole new world to all students as MFL is not only looking at "learning another language", it also encompasses looking at patterns within our own language and where words originate from. In addition, it creates cross-curricular links with PSHE, RE, geography, history...'*

However, in spite of their enthusiasm, well over half express concern about issues such as training for teachers to deliver the curriculum to the standard that will be expected, how to find adequate time in an already busy school timetable and how to make transition to Key Stage 3 more effective. Some do not want to spend time on teaching their pupils a foreign language when they are already struggling with English and feel that curriculum time would be better devoted to EAL rather than languages such as French or Spanish:

*'We have children speaking more than 38 languages as new users of English – compulsory MFL is no benefit to many of our children.'*

A selection of the free comments reflecting these concerns are provided below:

*'It is essential that children are prepared to be global citizens. However, it will be a challenge in primary school to ensure that children will achieve an appropriate level at the end of Key Stage 2 after learning a language for four years without specialist teaching and/or a great deal of training for colleagues, as the language needs to be embedded throughout the week, not just one afternoon.'*

*'We believe that it is important to our pupils' future economic well-being and to their development as members of a global society to have positive attitudes towards, and an enjoyment of, learning other languages. However, the government has not put in place appropriate support for the primary sector, where there is often no access to a native speaker or specifically trained language specialist.'*

*'The curriculum is already overloaded. A foreign language is not valued by parents and pupils struggle to reach average grades in the core subjects.'*

*'... I hope that through languages we can add another dimension to learning throughout the school. I hope it will have an impact on children's literacy through recognition of root words, cognates etc., and that they will begin to acquire a skill that will help them in their adult life. Languages will enhance their understanding of the world, its peoples and cultures... My concerns are that we do not have enough specialist teachers for each school, or class teachers who are suitably qualified according to the key stage they are in to ensure that all pupils receive high quality teaching which encourages progression at every stage of their education. Also that one hour a week will not be enough to meet the requirement of equal competence of the four skills (particularly writing and grammar).'*

#### 4.6 | Key points

- As many as 95 per cent of primary schools in this survey are already teaching a language and 42 per cent say they already meet the requirements of the new National Curriculum which will come into force in September 2014. However, in many cases the amount of time allocated for language learning and the teachers' level of linguistic competence are unlikely to be sufficient to meet the expectations set out in the new programmes of study.
- The teaching of reading, writing and grammatical understanding are seen as challenging by three quarters of respondents.
- Some 30 per cent of responding primary schools have a member of staff with a degree in the language they are teaching; however, in 24 per cent of schools, GCSE is the highest level of linguistic competence held by any member of staff.
- Schools are aware of the need for further training to boost staff competence and confidence and highlight the need for support and guidance, particularly in developing effective systems of monitoring and assessing learning. In total 33 per cent of schools – the same proportion as in the 2012 survey – currently do not have systems in place to monitor or assess pupil progress in the foreign language.
- There is a low level of engagement with subject-specific CPD that would enable teachers to improve their subject knowledge to teach languages to Key Stage 2 pupils. Much support that was previously available through local authorities or secondary school partnerships no longer exists. There is little evidence of the involvement of Teaching Schools in the provision of CPD for primary school teachers charged with teaching a language.
- When results from the 2013/14 survey are compared with those from the 2012 survey, there is evidence that confidence levels among classroom teachers at Key Stage 2 are not increasing. Some 29 per cent of respondents think staff teaching languages in Years 5/6 in their school are not confident, compared with 27 per cent in 2012.
- Some 50 per cent of schools are concerned about the pressures on the curriculum and at finding sufficient curriculum time to integrate languages properly so that the expectations of the new National Curriculum can be met.

# 5

## Transition from primary to secondary school

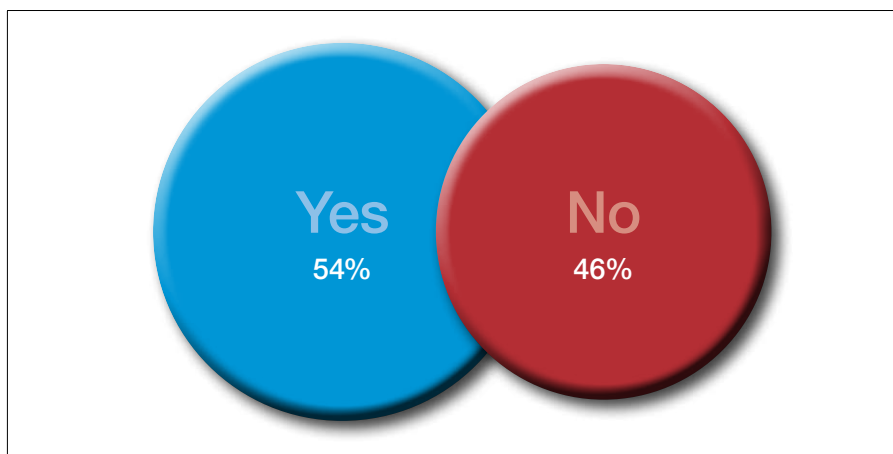
This is the first time that the Language Trends survey report has included a chapter dedicated exclusively to the topic of transition from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3. With the imminent introduction in September 2014 of statutory languages tuition throughout Key Stage 2, there is a strong steer from the government that Key Stage 2 teaching must focus on enabling pupils to make significant progress in one language and lay the foundations for further study in Key Stage 3, and that teaching of modern foreign languages in Key Stage 3 should 'build on the foundations laid at Key Stage 2'. It is clearly important that primary and secondary schools work together to ensure that pupils experience continuity in language learning as they progress from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3.

In both the primary and secondary surveys teachers were asked about the extent and nature of their collaboration with each other. What is evident from both the quantitative and qualitative data gathered is that transition from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3 for languages is a considerable problem for the vast majority of primary and secondary schools. We will see in Chapter 6 that 61 per cent of state schools say that providing continuity of learning from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3 will be one of their biggest challenges in implementing the new national curriculum. The findings below set out the scale of the problem.

### 5.1 | Primary schools' contacts with secondary schools

#### Do primary schools have contacts with the language departments of local secondary schools?

Nearly half of responding primary schools report that they have no contact at all with language specialists in their local secondary school.

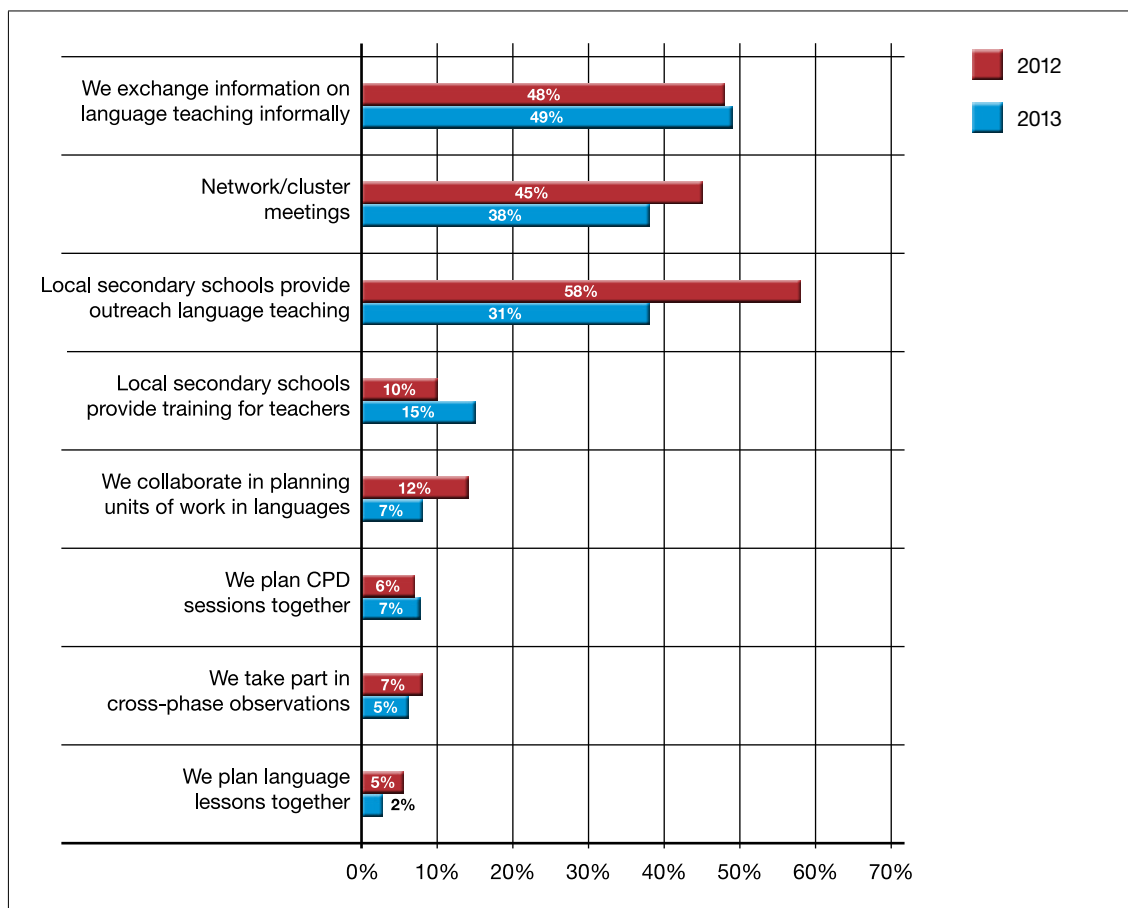


The question was asked slightly differently in 2012, when 40 per cent said that they had *formal* contacts.

#### What type of contacts do primary schools have?

Those that do have contacts (297 of the responding schools) were asked to say what contacts they had, and their responses were compared to those of respondents to the 2012 survey (multiple responses were permitted).

Figure 23: Types of contact with local secondary schools, 2012 and 2013\*



\*Multiple responses permitted

The data shows there has been a big drop in the proportion of primary schools where language teaching is performed by outreach teachers from local secondary schools (38 per cent, down from 58 per cent). Some of the reasons survey respondents gave for this and for the ending of other interesting and valuable initiatives were: the workload of Key Stage 3 teachers, reductions in school budgets and the considerable number of feeder schools involved, as well as the distance from the secondary school. Respondents' comments include the following:

*'We used to get support from the local authority and through them we used to have monthly cluster meetings to share good practice. This no longer happens.'*

*'This used to happen but no longer and has not done for over a year.'*



Compared to 2012, responses this year indicate that there are fewer opportunities for networking or for cluster meetings, less collaboration in planning and cross-phase observation, but slightly more informal exchange of information. Provision of training by secondary schools for primary school teachers of languages appears to have increased slightly since last year's survey, although this question was phrased differently in 2012 and referred specifically to 'language improvement courses'. Teachers' comments show that where contact does exist, it is generally 'event-based', for example Language Days or Festivals, rather than formal collaboration or teacher development. There are, however, some interesting examples of close collaboration such as the respondent who commented:

*'Local secondary does offer outreach teaching of French but as we already offer French teaching ourselves, this year they offered each of our Year 5 and 6 classes three outreach lessons of German as a "taster session". They also share assessment and resources like "language ladders" and we take Year 6 pupils to the secondary school for a language afternoon in the summer term where they experience learning two languages.'*

## 5.2 | Arrangements in secondary schools for receiving pupils who have learned a language in Key Stage 2

### Have schools started receiving significant numbers of pupils in Year 7 who have studied a language at Key Stage 2?

The responses to this question were compared to those from state and independent schools in 2012.

Table 6: Percentage of secondary schools receiving pupils who have already studied a language in Key Stage 2

	State		Independent	
	2012	2013	2012	2013
Yes	84%	72%	84%	73%

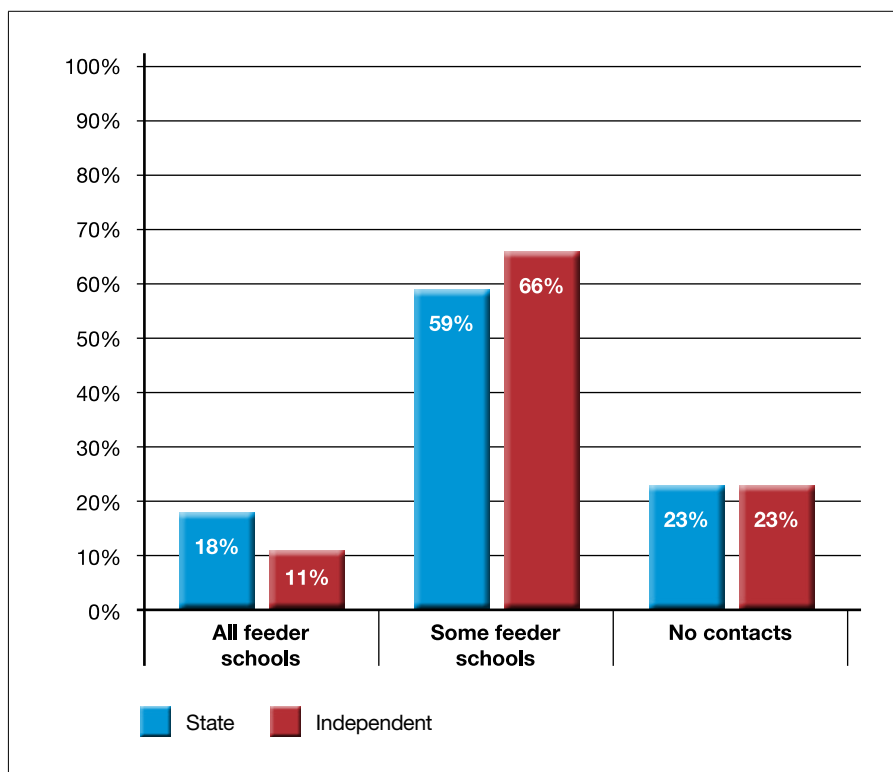
Compared with 2012, a smaller proportion of both state and independent schools report that they are receiving pupils into Year 7 with experience of language learning (72 per cent, compared to 84 per cent in 2012 in the state sector – very similar proportions in the independent sector).

A number of independent schools report a reduction in the numbers of pupils coming into Year 7 with previous experience of learning a language due to the fact that they are seeing an increase in the numbers of international students joining the school as well as greater numbers of pupils with learning difficulties.

### Do secondary language departments have contacts with local primary schools?

A total of 23 per cent of state (and independent) secondary schools report that they have no contact at all with their feeder schools on languages. The majority (59 per cent state sector, 66 per cent independent sector) have limited contact, but not with all feeder schools, while only 18 per cent state sector schools (11 per cent independent schools) say they have contact with all their feeder schools.

Figure 24: Secondary languages departments having contacts with local primary schools



A number of secondary schools report having tried unsuccessfully to develop contacts with their primary feeder schools, as illustrated in the following comments:

*'Last term I sent a letter inviting 20 of the closest feeder primary schools to a meeting at my school to discuss strategies/resources/best practice. I had two responses, both negative.'*

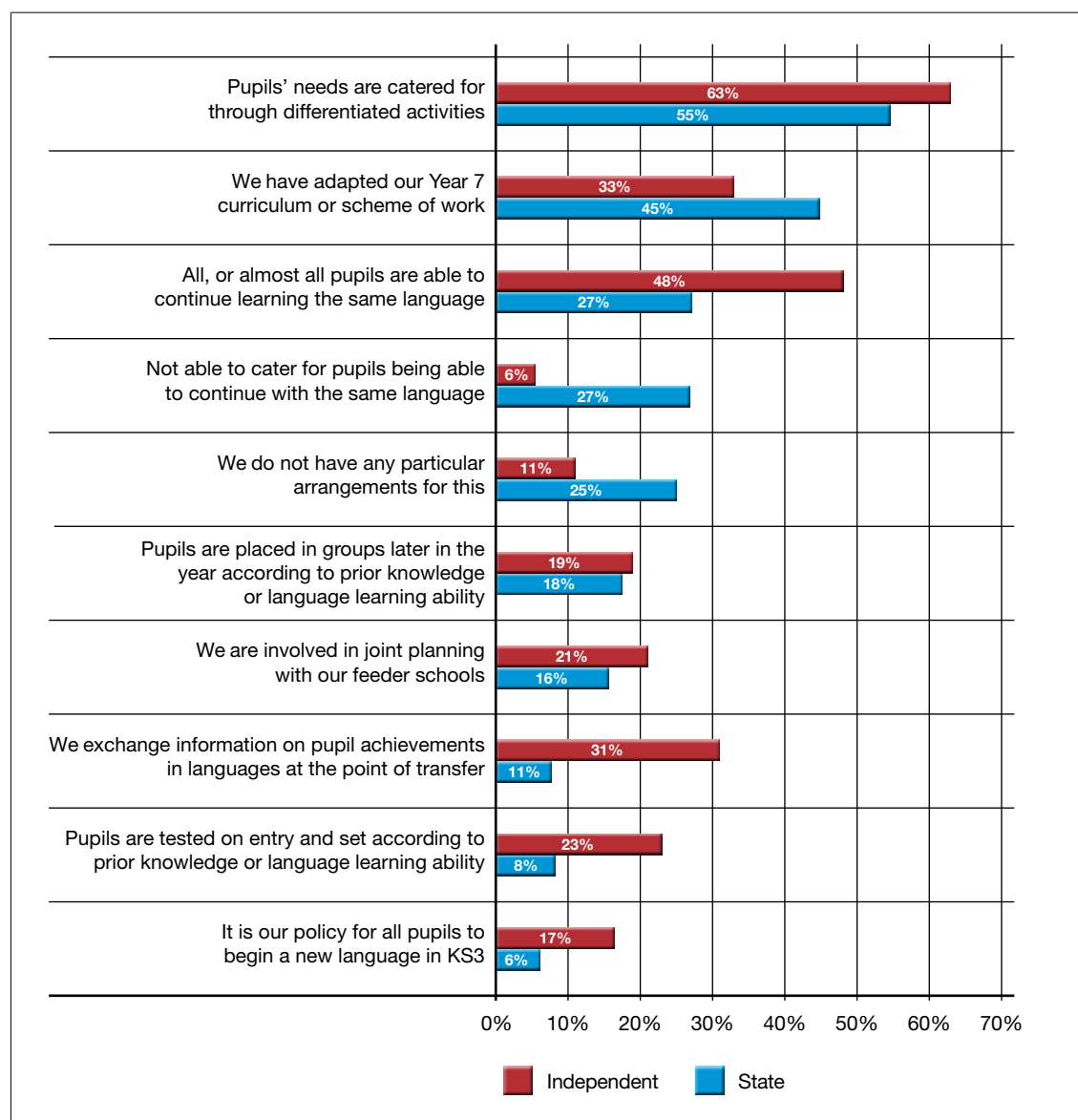
Financial constraints and workload are sometimes given as reasons for lack of contact with primary feeder schools, for example in this response:

*'We no longer have a Primary Languages Co-ordinator due to financial restrictions. Our staff are all fully deployed so there is no time for outreach.'*

In some cases independent schools report that they have only one feeder school, usually a junior section of the school which links directly into Year 7. Where this is the case, contact between management and teachers is clearly much easier and joint decisions can be taken about which languages are going to be taught across the key stages, aiding progression and the ability to build on prior learning.

### What arrangements do secondary schools have to build on pupils' prior learning in Key Stage 2?

Figure 25: Arrangements in secondary schools to build on pupils' prior learning in Key Stage 2\*



\*Multiple responses permitted

The evidence shows that the independent sector is better placed to provide pupils moving from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3 with continuity of language provision. A total of 48 per cent of independent schools report that they are able to do so, with only just over five per cent saying that this is not possible. In the state sector, however, as many as 27 per cent of schools say they 'are not able to cater for pupils being able to continue with the same language' and a similar proportion say they are able to do so. Only 11 per cent of state schools (but 31 per cent of independent schools) say they exchange information on pupil achievements in languages at the point of transfer.

### 5.3 | Transition: comparative views of primary and secondary teachers

Respondents to both the primary and secondary surveys were asked to comment on issues relating to the transition of pupils between Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3. The responses indicate a number of difficulties on both sides, as the tables below show. With the imminent commencement of compulsory language teaching for all pupils at Key Stage 2 from September 2014, the issue of effective transition and progression of learning is something which needs addressing urgently.

Responses to the questions 'What types of contact do you have with the language departments of local secondary schools?' (Primary survey), 'Does your languages department have contacts with local primary schools?' and 'Please tell us what arrangements you have to build on pupils' prior learning in Key Stage 2 to ensure continuity and progression' (Secondary survey) produced both quantitative and qualitative data from which the comments in the tables below have been drawn.

Teachers in many primary and secondary schools struggle to establish sustainable collaboration to help improve the transition of their pupils from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3. Given that the numbers of primary feeder schools can be very large, such collaboration can be complex and requires teachers to have both capacity and time.

Table 7: Comments regarding communication, planning and logistics

Communication, planning and logistics	
Primary	Secondary
<p><i>I feel that there should be greater cohesion and opportunities for progression between primary and secondary schools.</i></p> <p><i>I was approached by one of our local secondaries for details of our curriculum, which I provided. I have heard nothing else from them.</i></p> <p><i>Liaison with secondary schools will not be forthcoming – it is essential to ensure progression rather than repetition.</i></p> <p><i>We used to get support from the local authority and through them we used to have monthly cluster meetings to share good practice. This no longer happens. A worry is the fact that the local secondary school have never really been willing to adapt their planning and liaise with us. Surely this has to be a priority.</i></p>	<p><i>It is difficult when we have children coming into Year 7 from over 20 primary schools, all with different language learning experiences.</i></p> <p><i>Very difficult as we have over 80 feeder primaries.</i></p> <p><i>It would be great to find out what primary schools are doing, but this would be complex to organise.</i></p> <p><i>We have tried to make a link but primary schools are not interested.</i></p>

Secondary schools struggle to cope with the diversity of children's language learning experiences in Key Stage 2, and frequently perceive it to have been of little value. However, primary teachers are concerned about pupils becoming disenchanted with the subject if what they have learned is not recognised.

Table 8: Comments regarding levels and expectations

Levels and expectations	
Primary	Secondary
<p><i>We are already finding that the transition between Key Stage 2 and 3 is a tricky one as the children are going to high school with a higher language knowledge and we are finding that they are not challenged enough.</i></p> <p><i>Our content has to be fairly restricted so that our children are not disenchanted by repeat learning at Key Stage 3.</i></p> <p><i>Teachers have varying degrees of expertise in MFL, and lack of expertise could lead to inaccurate teaching, which is probably not appreciated by our secondary colleagues.</i></p> <p><i>Our fear is that the children will repeat all the work they have done with us when they reach secondary school and lose their enthusiasm for languages through boredom.</i></p> <p><i>The main challenge is ensuring pupils do not become disaffected in any way when they go to Key Stage 3 and are asked to repeat some of the things again because of the difficulties of pupils having different primary experiences. We are trying very hard to work with the secondary school to ease this problem but it is difficult.</i></p> <p><i>I am still unsure about writing/ grammatical features as I have heard many secondary schools do not welcome primary schools teaching this.</i></p>	<p><i>We have found that those who have studied a language at Key Stage 2 only have very basic knowledge, mainly lists of vocabulary, but are unable to make sentences orally. We therefore see little advantage in their previous knowledge.</i></p> <p><i>Some have had a set amount of lesson time each week for two years, others have had very little input.</i></p> <p><i>Key Stage 2 introduction of languages has been poorly managed and with the school's very wide range of primary feeder schools there is no perceptible common approach – which effectively means that we have to start from square one.</i></p> <p><i>To be honest, often their level is very very low and they are often demoralised after their time at Key Stage 2.</i></p> <p><i>Some primaries do attempt to send us levels but these very rarely match what the child is actually capable of when tested.</i></p>

Despite the fact that three quarters of primary schools offer French, and most of the rest offer Spanish – the two languages most commonly taught in secondary schools – there is a disconnect between the two key stages as regards languages offered, and frustration that teaching may be ‘wasted’ if pupils cannot continue with the same language.

Table 9: Comments on specific languages

Languages	
Primary	Secondary
<p><i>If they go on to learn German or French, our Spanish teaching is almost wasted.</i></p> <p><i>How will secondary schools pick up children from ten or more primaries with three or four different languages?</i></p> <p><i>This will only work when all the feeder schools to a secondary school elect to teach the same language.</i></p> <p><i>We are trying to coordinate the provision in local primaries with our feeder secondary but this is proving impossible and it looks likely that whatever language we choose will be unlikely to be offered in Year 7.</i></p> <p><i>... trying to convince our secondary school to teach Spanish and not just French and German.</i></p>	<p><i>50 per cent of our Key Stage 3 learn German and this is never offered at Key Stage 2.</i></p> <p><i>Also so many feeder schools to a secondary school means the variety of languages cannot be continued.</i></p> <p><i>Transition from primary to secondary is not assisted by forcing primary to offer languages which match what secondary can offer.</i></p> <p><i>Half do French and therefore often have prior knowledge. The other half do German and don't usually have prior knowledge.</i></p>

Teachers in both key stages are concerned about damaging pupils' motivation.

Table 10: Comments on pupil motivation and enthusiasm

Pupil motivation and enthusiasm	
Primary	Secondary
<p><i>I hope to improve languages within Key Stage 2, so that children are able to transition to secondary school smoothly and take up a language there with more proficiency. I also hope to invigorate and enthuse the children to want to learn a language.</i></p> <p><i>My fear is how this will continue when the children move up to secondary school. At the moment the language teaching in primary schools is dismissed by secondaries and children have to start again, so unless more work is done with regards to transition then all the hard work that primaries are putting in will be for nothing.</i></p>	<p><i>More than ever before, we are experiencing large numbers of pupils saying that they don't like French before they get to secondary school as the provision is not good enough in primary schools.</i></p> <p><i>Key Stage 3 is all about motivation and making languages appear attractive/easy.</i></p> <p><i>Year 7 students often report back rather negatively on their experiences of language learning at Key Stage 2 and many are pleasantly surprised at how different things are in our language lessons and how quickly they progress.</i></p>

Primary schools are looking for support from secondary schools, who do not see providing this as part of their remit.

Table 11: Comments on support and training for staff

Support and training	
Primary	Secondary
<p><i>We lost all our support and training from the local authority and secondary school two years ago, so it is a difficult time to be introducing a new language with little support.</i></p> <p><i>We will need to implement a new scheme of work which provides us with the opportunity to show progress and assess children's abilities in these areas. We aim to improve our links with Key Stage 3 / local high schools.</i></p>	<p><i>I think it is unlikely they will be seriously implemented. There are not enough primary school teachers and not enough time to be able to deliver languages to a level which has an impact on Key Stage 3.</i></p> <p><i>If they offer any MFL, then the offer is extremely varied in quantity and quality, as well as language.</i></p>



In spite of the fact that many schools report difficulties in creating effective collaboration around the point of transition from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3, there are also schools working together innovatively to ensure that pupils move from Year 6 to Year 7 with as little disruption to their learning as possible.

Table 12: Comments on collaboration between schools

Schools working together	
Primary	Secondary
<p><i>The liaison is unique in the county, with the secondary [school] providing expert help as well as support from language leaders in school.</i></p> <p><i>We pass on a Language Ladder Assessment for pupils at transfer.</i></p> <p><i>Our school hosts city briefings for primary schools across the city to keep them updated on new events. We also regularly meet with several leading teachers from primary and secondary schools to share good practice.</i></p> <p><i>We are a member of a 'languages group' which includes our local high school and other local primary schools.</i></p> <p><i>There have been some transition units for Year 6 based on language learning, where the secondary language teacher has visited the primary schools in the local pyramid.</i></p>	<p><i>Joint teaching in the summer term. Termly meetings. Activities organised for the Key Stage 2 – Key Stage 3 transition. Training for Key Stage 2 teachers.</i></p> <p><i>As a languages specialist, we do a lot of outreach work with local primary schools. A secondary MFL specialist goes into local schools on a weekly basis to deliver and show how to plan Schemes of Work.</i></p> <p><i>We have established good links with primary schools and have worked with pupils from Year 3 upwards for the last three years. Pupils in Years 4–6 come from each feeder school at least once a year and work with MFL staff and pupils. A couple of our main feeder schools come once per term.</i></p> <p><i>We give all students a tick box list of topics and basic grammar on induction day in June and we put this into a spreadsheet. We have recently contacted our main feeders to ask them what they have covered from the (regionally produced) scheme of work and have put this into a spreadsheet. Last year we sent our assistants into local primaries to run language sessions. We run a primary celebration day for Year 5/6 students and put on a range of taster sessions. We run welcome sessions on Year 7 induction day. We also provided all incoming Year 7 students with their own personal Rosetta Stone login on Induction Day this year for them to use over the summer.</i></p>

## 5.4 | Key points

- Nearly half (46 per cent) of primary schools have no contact at all with language specialists in their local secondary schools. There is evidence of a severe disconnect across the system between primary and secondary schools, with only 11 per cent of state secondary schools saying they receive or request data on pupil achievements. Less than one third (27 per cent) of state secondary schools are able to ensure that all pupils can continue with the same language they learned in primary school. In the independent sector the percentage is higher (48 per cent).
- The number of state secondary schools who say they are receiving pupils with experience of language learning in Key Stage 2 has gone down to 72 per cent in 2013 from 84 per cent in 2012. In many cases where there is evidence of prior learning, secondary schools regard it as being of poor or variable quality and insufficient on which to build.
- Some 18 per cent of state secondary schools have contacts with all their feeder primary schools. However, the majority are unable to establish effective contacts with large numbers of primary feeder schools due to teachers' workloads, financial constraints and geographical distance. The data from this survey suggests that the levels of collaboration are declining rather than increasing, even though the statutory teaching of languages at Key Stage 2 is due to commence in September 2014.

# 6

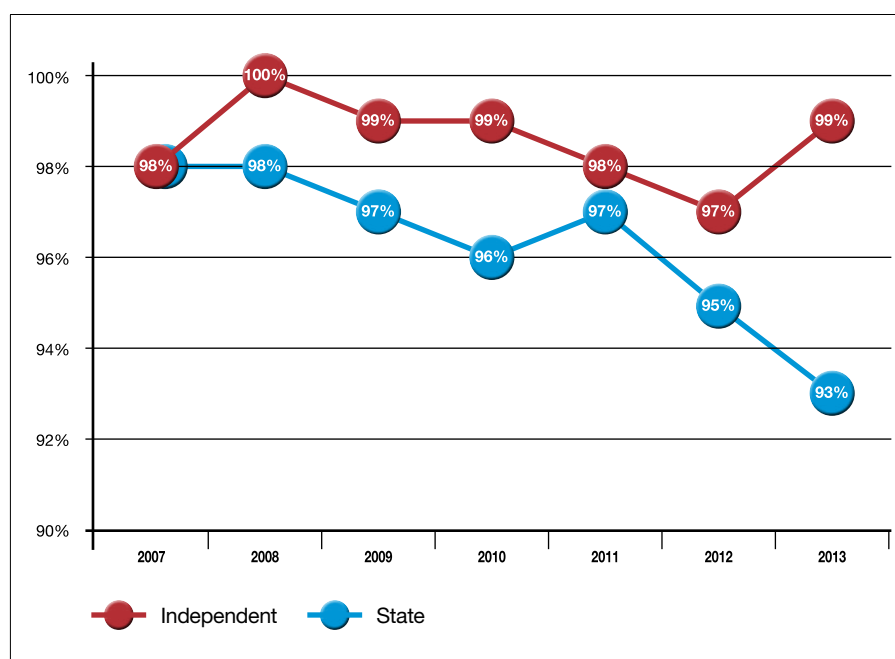
## Language teaching in secondary schools

Having been the only key stage since 2004 in which the study of a language is compulsory, Key Stage 3 provides a rich source of longitudinal data with which to explore trends in the teaching of languages in the many different school settings across the country. Key Stage 3 data is also critical in linking both to Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4. This chapter also explores some more general issues affecting languages in secondary schools, such as accreditation, time for languages, and teacher training and development.

### 6.1 | Key Stage 3

#### Do all, or almost all pupils study a language throughout Key Stage 3?

Figure 26: Schools where all or almost all pupils study a language throughout Key Stage 3, 2007–2013



There is an increasing trend for state schools not to teach a language to all pupils throughout Key Stage 3 (just over seven per cent). However, only one independent school in our sample has this policy. In their additional responses to the question 'Do all, or almost all pupils study a language throughout Key Stage 3?', state school respondents note that pupils are withdrawn from foreign languages in order to receive extra support with literacy or numeracy:

*'Approximately 25 per cent of students in Years 7 and 8 are withdrawn from MFL to catch up with literacy and numeracy levels.'*

*'Three quarters take a language. The others take extra literacy classes.'*

*'... two thirds of Key Stage 3 – as the rest follow a different curriculum with support in literacy and numeracy.'*

*'... approximately 20 per cent of some year groups, to concentrate on core subjects.'*

*'Two classes out of three study French, and the other class studies language development to help raise literacy levels.'*

However, compare the responses above with the picture presented by respondents from the independent sector:

*'100 per cent study a language at Key Stage 3.'*

*'Very few, due to Special Educational Needs (SEN) or parental request.'*

*'Two or three in each year group, who do either extra English or get help in the Assisted Learning Unit.'*

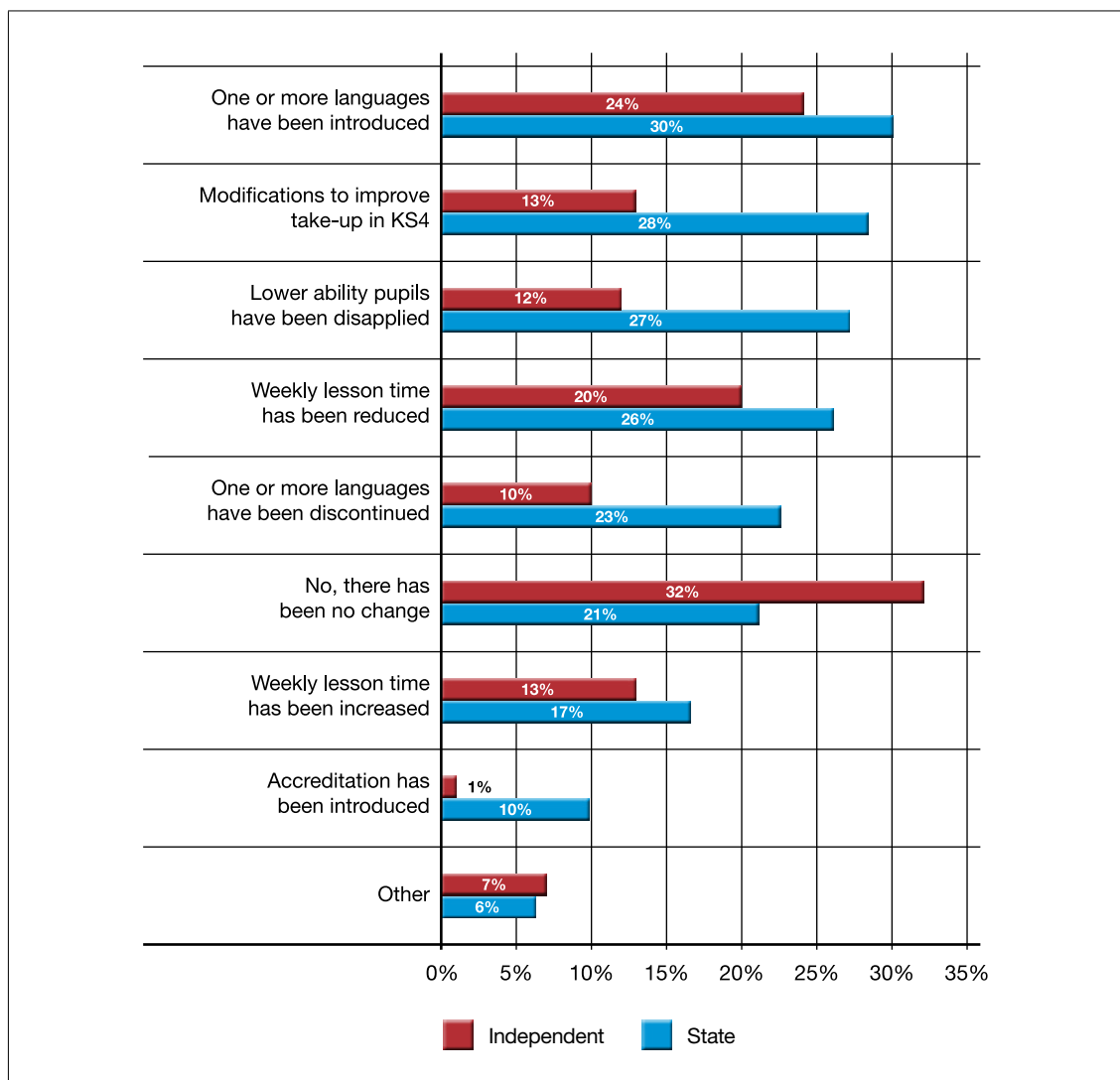
Not all state schools have chosen to go down the path of disapplying those pupils with lower levels of academic ability, as this respondent shows:

*'Occasionally an SEN child will be disappplied, but we are very proud of our Languages for All policy and the number being disappplied has reduced over the years. We use language skills to reinforce Literacy.'*

### **What changes have schools made recently to language provision in Key Stage 3?**

A total of 27 per cent of state schools report that they disapply lower-ability pupils from languages in Key Stage 3 (12 per cent of independents). Some 26 per cent of state schools (20 per cent of independents) have reduced lesson time for languages.

Figure 27: Recent changes to Key Stage 3 provision for languages\*



\*Multiple responses permitted

Comparing these responses to those in the 2012 survey shows that in state schools, the pace of change in Key Stage 3 language provision is increasing. Compared to 2012, more schools are now introducing or discontinuing particular languages – the proportions doing so in state schools in 2012 were 25 per cent and 16 per cent respectively compared with 30 per cent and 23 per cent in the 2013/14 survey shown in the chart above. Comments show that these changes are largely in response to changes in specialist staffing or as a result of poor take-up. The changes have meant that German and French are losing ground while Spanish is gaining:

*'September 2013 saw us move from being a main subject French school in Key Stage 3 with some higher-ability pupils being introduced to Spanish in Year 9 to a wholly Spanish school throughout Key Stage 3, and no opportunity to start French.'*

In 2013 more schools say they have reduced lesson time for languages – 26 per cent of state schools compared with 21 per cent in 2012:

*'... weekly lesson time has been reduced significantly, from six hours a fortnight for all year groups to five hours per fortnight for Year 7 and four hours per fortnight for Years 8 and 9.'*

More schools are now disapplying low-ability pupils – 27 per cent of state schools in 2013, compared with 21 per cent in 2012. More schools are also making modifications to ensure greater numbers of pupils will continue with a language in Key Stage 4 (28 per cent of state schools compared with 18 per cent in 2012).

However, the percentage of schools who have introduced accreditation at the end of Key Stage 3 is lower than it was in 2012 – ten per cent compared with 16 per cent in 2012 in the state sector, and only one per cent compared with six per cent in 2012 in the independent sector. Those that have introduced accreditation in Key Stage 3 mention principally either Asset Languages or the Foundation Certificate of Secondary Education (FCSE)<sup>40</sup> as the accreditation they have chosen for their Key Stage 3 pupils – Table 13 provides greater detail.

In the independent sector, there are fewer changes than in the state sector, and in general fewer changes than were reported in 2012. The most significant change in the independent sector is that more schools say they are modifying provision to ensure greater numbers continue into Key Stage 4 (13 per cent in 2013 compared with two per cent in 2012). This is consistent with greater numbers of independent schools making a language optional in Key Stage 4 (see Chapter 7). A selection of comments from respondents in the independent sector relating to changes they have made to the provision of languages at Key Stage 3 follows:

*'We have introduced the FCSE in Year 9 to try to reward language learning at the end of Year 9 and to provide an incentive/motivation to continue to GCSE.'*

*'Lower ability pupils, who previously had been disapplied, now all study at least one language at Key Stage 3, with some additional support.'*

*'All Year 7 girls now take the three curriculum languages for a year's "taster" before choosing which two languages they want to continue with into Years 8 and 9.'*

<sup>40</sup> FCSE is a nationally accredited qualification designed to recognise the pre-GCSE achievement of secondary pupils. It tests all four skills and includes an experience of the controlled assessment also used in GCSE.

## 6.2 | Accreditation

### What accreditation for languages do schools offer at each key stage?

The 2007 Languages Review, which was commissioned to investigate the steep decline in take-up of languages at GCSE after it became an optional subject at Key Stage 4, recommended that there should be a wider choice of assessment options to motivate greater numbers of pupils to continue to study a language, since it was recognised that the GCSE course was not suitable for all pupils.<sup>41</sup> Table 13 shows the percentages of state and independent schools offering different forms of accreditation of each key stage.

Table 13: Forms of accreditation offered by state and independent schools

	Key Stage 3		Key Stage 4		Post-16	
	State	Independent	State	Independent	State	Independent
Asset Languages	5%	4%	3%	1%	1%	3%
Entry level certificate	2%	-	2%	-	-	-
ASDAN	-	-	1%	-	-	-
FCSE	12%	3%	5%	-	1%	-
GCSE	5%	2%	97%	71%	3%	1%
IGCSE	-	3%	4%	47%	-	3%
International Baccalaureate			1%	-	4%	11%
NVQ language units	1%	1%	6%	-	4%	-
AS			3%	3%	93%	94%
A level			1%	2%	92%	96%
Pre-U					-	6%
Other	1%	2%	1%	-	-	1%

In common with findings from previous years, state schools are more likely than independent schools to offer FCSE and National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) language units. FCSE qualifications are used by 12 per cent of state schools in Key Stage 3, possibly as accreditation for pupils who do not progress to GCSE courses. NVQ language units are more likely to be offered in Key Stage 4 and this may be as an alternative to GCSE on the grounds that the courses of study leading to these qualifications are more motivating and more appropriate for particular groups of pupils. Nearly half of independent schools now offer IGCSE qualifications in languages and 29 per cent appear to have abandoned GCSEs for languages altogether.

<sup>41</sup> DfES (2007)

Comparing evidence from this survey collected over a number of years, it is now clear that there is a declining trend in state secondary schools in the use of NVQ language units (six per cent in Key Stage 4, down from ten per cent in 2012). This is consistent with the removal of these qualifications from the list of those which count towards school performance tables.

However, comments from respondents show that a number of schools continue to offer NVQ as an alternative programme of study to GCSE because they believe it is more appropriate for certain students and encourages them to continue to study a language rather than fail in an academic route for which they are not suited. In the words of one respondent:

*'We are still offering NVQ – seen as more appropriate for some of our pupils even though it will not count in league tables. The Head wants pupils to accept that they WILL continue with a language, more important than the qualification at the moment.'*

There is also a very small but growing number of state schools offering the International Baccalaureate (IB) (four per cent, up from two per cent in 2012). In the independent sector there is a considerable increase in the use of IGCSE (47 per cent in Key Stage 4, up from 15 per cent in 2012) as well as a smaller increase in the use of the IB (11 per cent, up from eight per cent in 2012). Free comments from independent schools confirm the move to IGCSE as a replacement for GCSE, which is regarded as unsatisfactory:

*'We have switched this year from GCSE to IGCSE to get back to language learning.'*

*'With the introduction of IGSCE I believe that the pupils are better equipped for AS and A2 level.'*

The use of Asset has not only declined in both sectors, but has now ceased, consistent with the decision by OCR to withdraw the qualification<sup>42</sup> from November 2013.

A comparison with previous years' figures shows that independent schools are increasingly more likely to offer alternative accreditation to GCSE and A level, whereas state schools are increasingly less likely to do so.

Some five per cent of responding state schools practise 'early entry' GCSE in Key Stage 3, a phenomenon which is having a detrimental effect on take-up for languages post-16, as we discuss in Chapter 8.

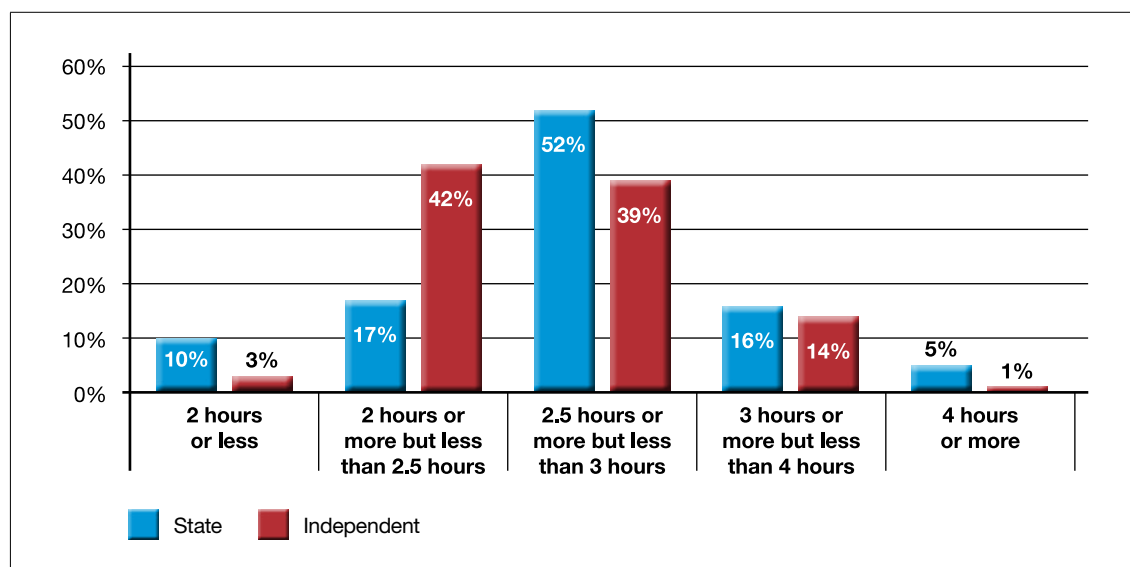
<sup>42</sup> OCR (2013b)



### 6.3 | Time for languages

**How many teaching hours per week are currently allocated to Key Stage 4 pupils taking a language at GCSE?**

Figure 28: Lesson time for languages in Key Stage 4 – percentages of state and independent schools

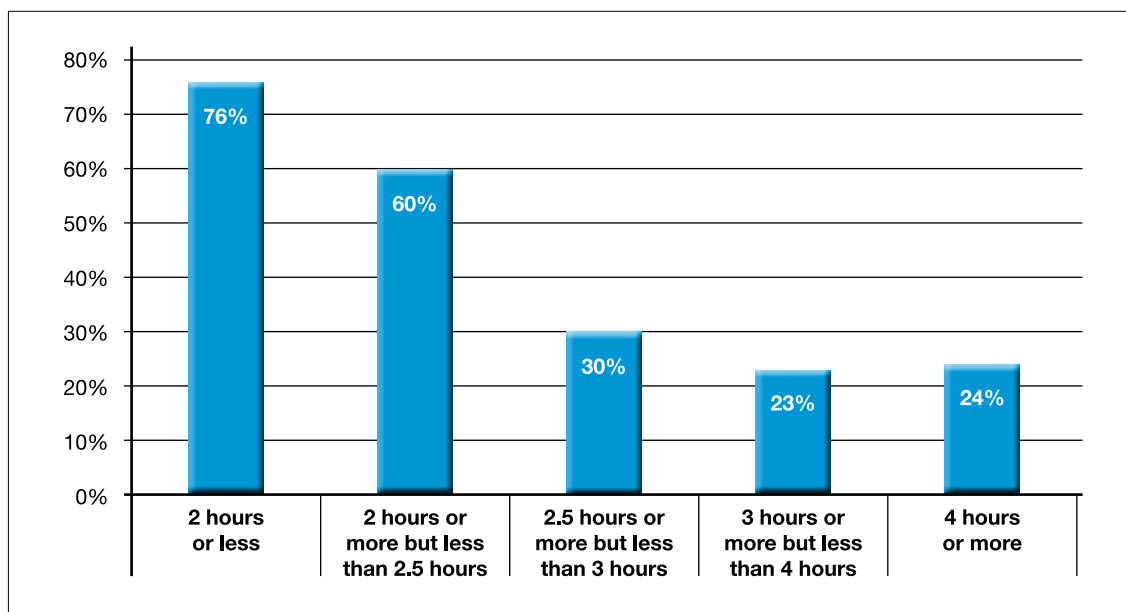


The chart above shows that in the state sector, a small majority of schools allocate between two and a half and three hours per week to language classes in Key Stage 4. Smaller proportions (16 per cent and 17 per cent respectively) allocate between three and four hours, or between two and two and a half hours. Some ten per cent of schools allocate less than two hours per week but, at the other end of the spectrum, five per cent set aside four hours or more. The independent sector is likely to allocate slightly less time for languages than this.

#### **Do respondents believe the time allotted for language study in Key Stage 4 is adequate?**

A total of 39 per cent of state school respondents and 38 per cent of those from independent schools say that the time allocation for languages in Key Stage 4 in their school is not adequate for them to teach their pupils the language to the level required by the examination for which they are preparing. Typical concerns include the large amount of time required to prepare pupils for the controlled assessment element of the GCSE examination, leaving little time for teaching the language itself, and class time only giving teachers sufficient time to teach what is explicitly required for the examination rather than to develop the ability to use the language creatively and spontaneously. As is to be expected, these responses correlate strongly with schools which allocate shorter amounts of time to languages in the curriculum. Where the time allocation is less than two and a half hours per week, a majority of respondents say this is not adequate.

Figure 29: Respondents saying the time allotted for languages in their school is not adequate (state schools only)



The qualitative evidence shows that while the majority of respondents believe that the time allocated is adequate, many express the wish for more time in order to progress beyond merely 'teaching to the test':

*'It is a push, but... we cope. I feel there isn't much time for teaching beyond the curriculum and teaching "real" language – with the current syllabus at GCSE we are teaching our pupils to be parrots a lot of the time.'*

Teachers need more time particularly to accommodate the management of the controlled assessment element of the GCSE:

*'We have two and a half hours per week, this is often not enough in Year 11 as the controlled assessments eat up most of the time. Without the controlled assessment this would be adequate.'*

There are some instances of time for languages at Key Stage 4 having been increased:

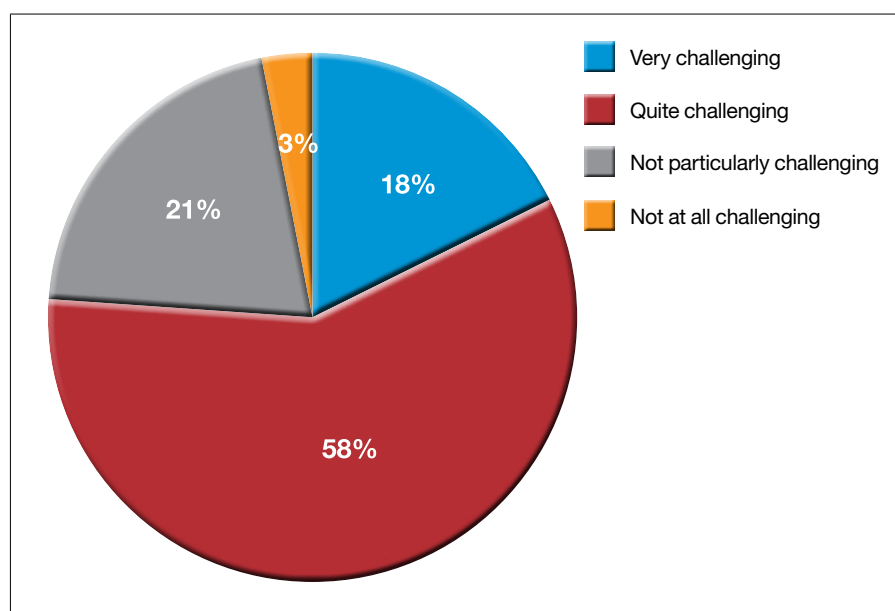
*'The time allocation has increased this year from four or five hours per fortnight to six. We see this as a welcome development.'*

## 6.4 | New National Curriculum and GCSE

### How challenging will it be for schools to implement the new National Curriculum requirements for languages and the proposed reformed GCSE subject content for languages?

The chart below shows that 76 per cent of state schools say implementing the new National Curriculum and GCSE will be either very or quite challenging. (In the independent sector, which is not required to adhere to the National Curriculum, but is affected by changes to national qualifications, the figure was 38 per cent.) Sponsored academies are more likely to report that this will be very challenging (31 per cent, compared with 19 per cent of non-academies). Only 13 per cent of converter academies, on the other hand, see the new National Curriculum as challenging to implement.

Figure 30: Levels of challenge for schools in implementing new policies (state schools)



In the free comments provided by respondents in response to the degree of challenge they foresee in implementing the new curriculum, the majority were from respondents who do not perceive the changes as far-reaching and believe that they will be able to take them in their stride:

*'From what we know of the new proposals, there will be little change from what we already do [in] teaching MFL.'*

*'The reforms are not vast in scope.'*

*'The new national curriculum framework is very similar. We will continue to use level descriptors as this remains the best way to measure and report pupil progress.'*

There are also a small number of respondents who express a lack of knowledge about the changes that will be required, for example:

*'I have no knowledge of the new National Curriculum requirements.'*

*'It is still not clear what the requirements will be.'*

Respondents are looking forward to the removal of the controlled assessments:

*'We are looking forward to the removal of controlled assessments and going back to the exam formula we had previously.'*

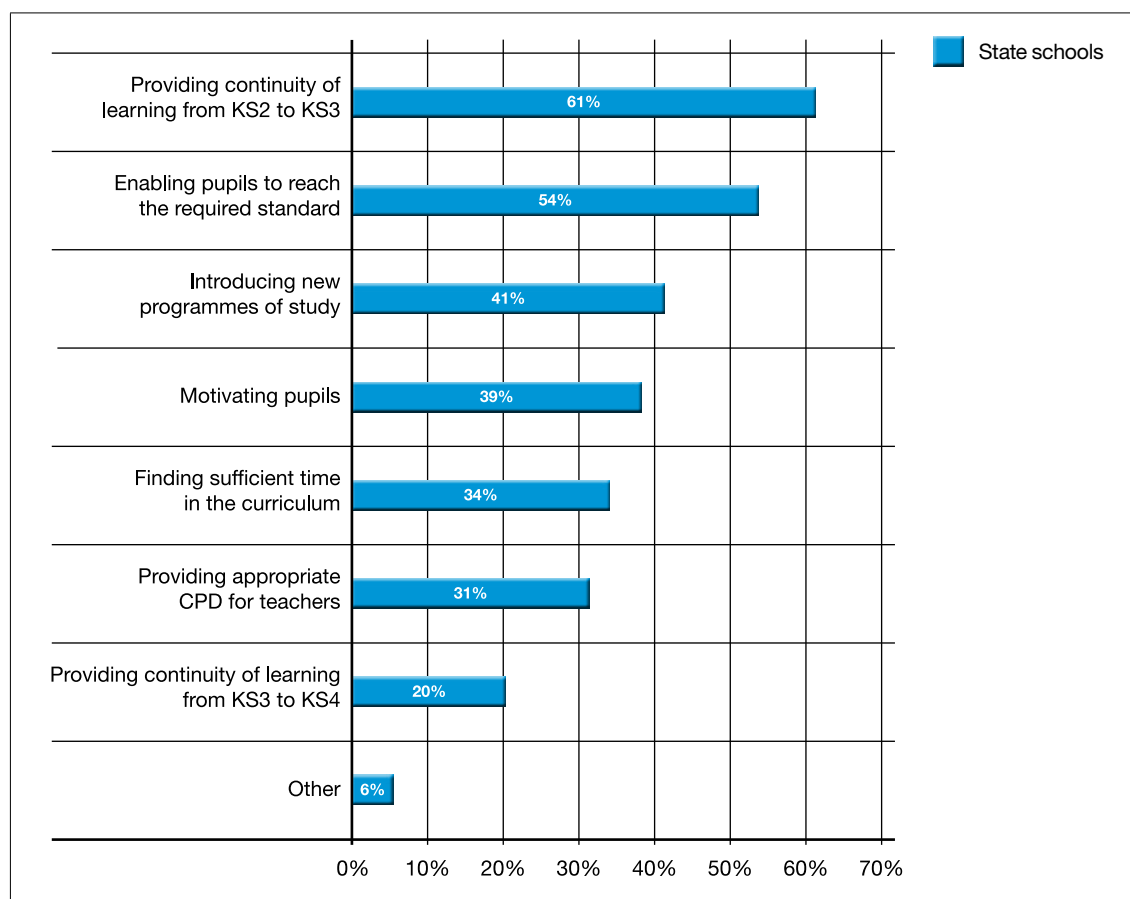
One academy (academies are not obliged to follow the National Curriculum) responded as follows:

*'As an academy, we are in the process of writing our own National Curriculum and we are excited by the prospect... MFL will use the old curriculum as a model and add in or take out as we see fit. As for GCSE, we hated coursework so much that we have just moved over to the Edexcel certificate and will probably stick with it now if it goes well over the next few years.'*

### What will be the biggest challenges for schools in implementing these changes?

The biggest challenges respondents see are providing continuity from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3 (see Chapter 5 for further findings on transition issues) and enabling pupils to reach the required standard. These challenges can, of course, be seen as linked. These are also challenges identified by independent schools (not shown), albeit in lower proportions.

Figure 31: Main challenges for state schools in implementing changes to National Curriculum and GCSE\*



\*Multiple responses permitted

Comments in relation to this question included the following:

*'I am not sure that literary texts are going to be that useful and relevant to how languages are used today in the workplace. I personally do not want to teach literature at GCSE level. I would prefer to use relevant authentic materials such as estate agent brochures or school reports, shop item descriptions, holiday brochures. Motivation of pupils will be a big issue here. It is fine for the more academic pupils but for the lower-ability pupils it will make MFL quite inaccessible and therefore only a subject for more able members of our comprehensive community.'*

*'Weaker pupils may struggle with the switch to all terminal exams.'*

*'The proposed GCSE changes risk setting the subject back decades by making a qualification only accessible to the most able pupils as in the bad old days. We are a non-selective school with a middle/low ability intake...'*

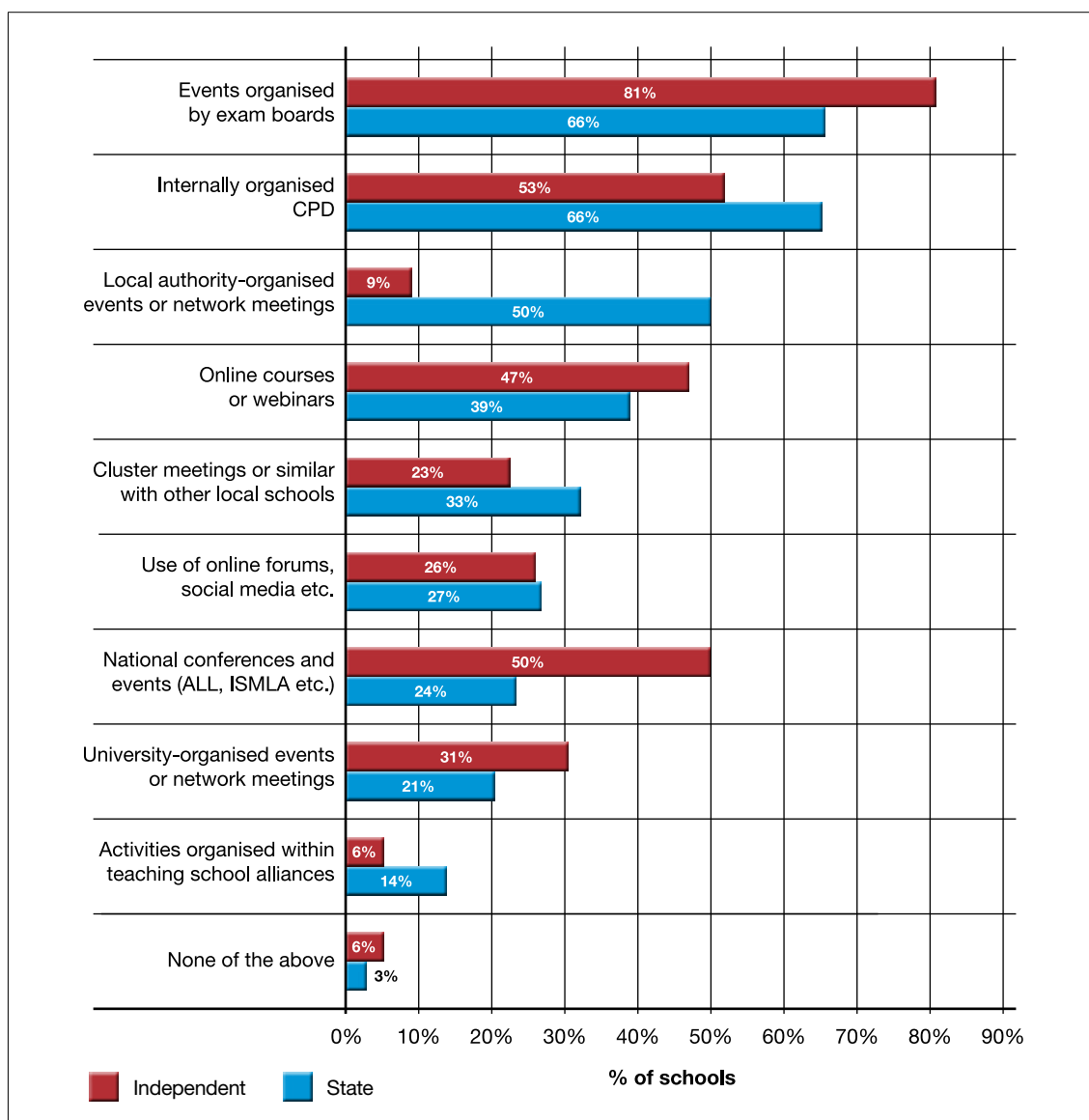
*'Sadly, many English pupils do not see the point of learning a modern language and therefore motivating them and their parents is difficult.'*

## 6.5 | Teacher training and development

Schools were asked about teachers' access to CPD over the previous twelve months and the chart below shows the range of training opportunities offered and the level of take-up for each.

### What types of CPD have teachers in languages departments attended in the past year?

Figure 32: Types of CPD attended by languages teachers in the past year, state and independent schools\*



\*Multiple responses permitted

Teachers in the state sector mainly attend training events provided by examination boards or internally organised within their own schools (66 per cent in each case). In the independent sector, CPD organised by examination boards features even more prominently (91 per cent). The reasons given in the free comments show that time and funding are major factors in determining what is offered to teachers and what they are able to participate in. School-based training, in particular, has the advantage of being inexpensive and minimally disruptive in terms of the time needed to attend the training. Some teachers are full of praise for the training they have received from the examination board:

*'The CPD provided by the exam boards has been the most useful as well as the internal CPD.'*

However, others are more critical, commenting:

*'All are very useful apart from online events from exam boards which have simply been farcical and very ineffective in sharing good practices and past experiences.'*

*'Exam Boards – often frustrating but necessary.'*

Only 14 per cent report having attended CPD organised by Teaching School Alliances (TSAs) but it is unclear whether or not all teachers know which schools are designated Teaching Schools, some TSAs having used the new structure more overtly than others. Respondents from the independent sector are more likely to attend training events organised by local universities and by the subject associations such as ALL and ISMLA, for example:

*'ALL and ISMLA are good for meeting MFL teachers beyond the local area and an excellent way of disseminating good practice.'*

One very interesting development to note from the many comments provided by respondents in answer to the question about CPD is the growing popularity of online forums, webinars and social media, and in particular Twitter, for example:

*'Twitter and local Teachmeets are the best form of CPD.'*

This is the case for both state and independent sector respondents. Given the rich range of responses to this question, an extensive sample of the qualitative evidence provided by the free comments is given below:

*'Exam boards are found to say one thing, publish another and then actually do another altogether. Feeling is they cannot be trusted in what they tell us!'*

*'Our experience of most local CPD leads us to the conclusion that most training is best carried out in house. It is now rare for us to send teaching staff on courses. The exception to this would be exam-specific training provided by our IGCSE board (CIE) and the International Baccalaureate Organisation.'*

*'I have found Twitter to be a great resource for sharing expertise with other MFL teachers. Exam board courses have been useful in helping us keep up with the ever-changing requirements at GCSE and A level. Cluster meetings with other Heads of Departments are also invaluable.'*

*'ALL + ISMLA do a wonderful job, their conferences are excellent. Exam boards slightly less so, the on-going issue of marking of oral exams at GCSE, AS+A2 where staff go on courses and then find the Board (whether it be AQA at GCSE or Edexcel at A Level) patently do not do what they say are doing, is profoundly worrying.'*

*'Most useful has been the use of Twitter – able to dip in and out and pick up lots of new ideas from many sources.'*

*'Exam board training tends to be poor, massively overpriced. Local network events are variable in terms of quality because they are reliant on teachers to go above and beyond normal work to provide them. Social media has been helpful personally #mfltwitterati etc.'*

It is significant that the issue of cost features strongly in so many of the comments, with many language departments opting for 'cheap' CPD where possible:

*'Price is usually an issue so online training is a good option.'*

*'Webinars – these are inconsistent but a good idea in general and much cheaper.'*

*'Online is effective – other training is costly.'*

*'Webinars are very useful, cheap and there is no need to travel.'*

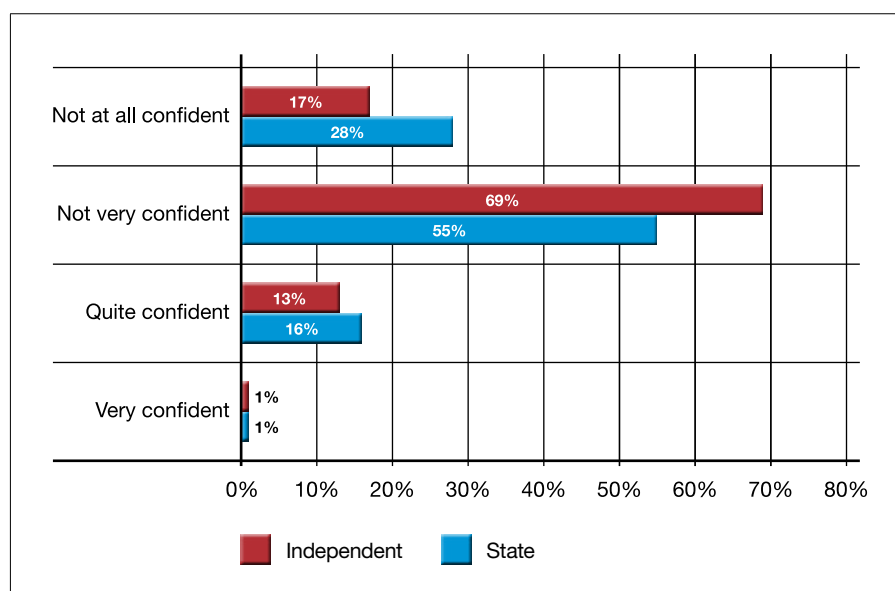
The quantitative data confirms findings from previous years that training provided by examination boards tends to dominate professional development for languages teachers, but the question must be asked as to whether this type of training addresses the issues and challenges being faced by many teachers of languages and identified in this survey.

## 6.6 | Confidence in government changes

### How confident do respondents feel that the changes being implemented by the government will improve the situation for languages?

As many as 83 per cent of state schools and 86 per cent of independents say they are not very confident or not at all confident that the changes being introduced will improve the position for languages in their school. Fewer than one per cent of state school respondents feel 'very confident' that the changes would improve the situation for languages. One of the main concerns expressed in the free comments by state sector respondents is that of Key Stage 2/3 continuity. There is a worry that primary phase teachers will not be able to teach languages at Key Stage 2 sufficiently well to ensure a smooth transition to Key Stage 3 (see Chapter 5).

Figure 33: Confidence in government changes (state and independent schools)



Respondents also express concern about a wide range of issues including GCSEs, severe grading at A level, lack of pupil motivation and provision for weaker pupils. A selection of the free comments supplied by respondents is provided below:

*'I am concerned by the rate of change. Whilst I will welcome the end of controlled assessment which I do not feel is an accurate measure of linguistic ability and is way too open to abuse, I am not sure that what is being proposed is suitable. Some of the skills and task types being proposed seem out of touch with reality and hardly likely to inspire young people today to want to study a language at post-16 or even beyond.'*



*'I am greatly concerned about the lack of A/A\* being awarded at GCSE level. How the written elements of the GCSE are marked is a complete mystery to me. It feels as if exam boards are making it as hard as possible (borderline impossible) for non-native speakers to access the top grades. This is having a huge impact upon Key Stage 5 uptake as students are taking subjects at AS/A2 level where they have scored the best GCSE grades. I fear that as soon as the EBacc fades this will filter down to GCSE as well and numbers will decrease here too. The main reason for their increase at GCSE in my school is due to the pressure of the EBacc and importance of facilitating subjects. Until this happened my school did very little to promote MFLs post Key Stage 3.'*

*'The condensing of the EBacc is a retrograde step as far as raising the profile of languages is concerned (lack of clarity as to whether EBacc does matter any more). A review of exam marking and linking GCSE skills to higher level (A Level) skills and requirements (i.e. to the reality of language use outside the classroom/exam room) is still needed despite current proposed reforms to GCSE. Current GCSE is too "stand-alone".'*

*'I am concerned that inadequate provision has been made for weaker students.'*

## 6.7 | Key points

- As many as 27 per cent of state schools carry out some form of disapplication of certain pupils from languages in Key Stage 3 and just over seven per cent of schools do not teach a foreign languages to all pupils throughout Key Stage 3. This means that despite languages being a statutory requirement for all, some pupils are not being given the opportunity to learn a foreign language. These practices are rarely seen in the independent sector.
- The majority of schools (76 per cent in the state sector and 38 per cent in the independent sector) say that implementing the new National Curriculum and GCSE specifications will be challenging for them. Providing continuity of learning from Key Stage 2 and enabling pupils to reach the required standard are seen as the biggest challenges.
- There has been rapid growth in the adoption of IGCSE as an alternative to language GCSEs in the independent sector. However, use of alternative accreditation in the state sector is declining, owing to the withdrawal of Asset Languages examinations and changes to qualifications which are included in school performance tables.
- Pressures of time and funding are adversely affecting teachers' access to CPD, with the most widespread form of CPD being that provided by examination boards. However, teachers are increasingly turning to online webinars and social media to access professional development.
- The vast majority of teachers (83 per cent state, 86 per cent independent) are not confident that the changes being introduced by the government will have a positive impact on the teaching of languages in their school.

# 7

## Impact of the English Baccalaureate on languages in Key Stage 4

Since the introduction of the EBacc as a performance measure for schools in 2011, the Language Trends survey has followed its implementation and tracked its impact on the study of a language by pupils in Key Stage 4.

### 7.1 | The status of languages in Key Stage 4

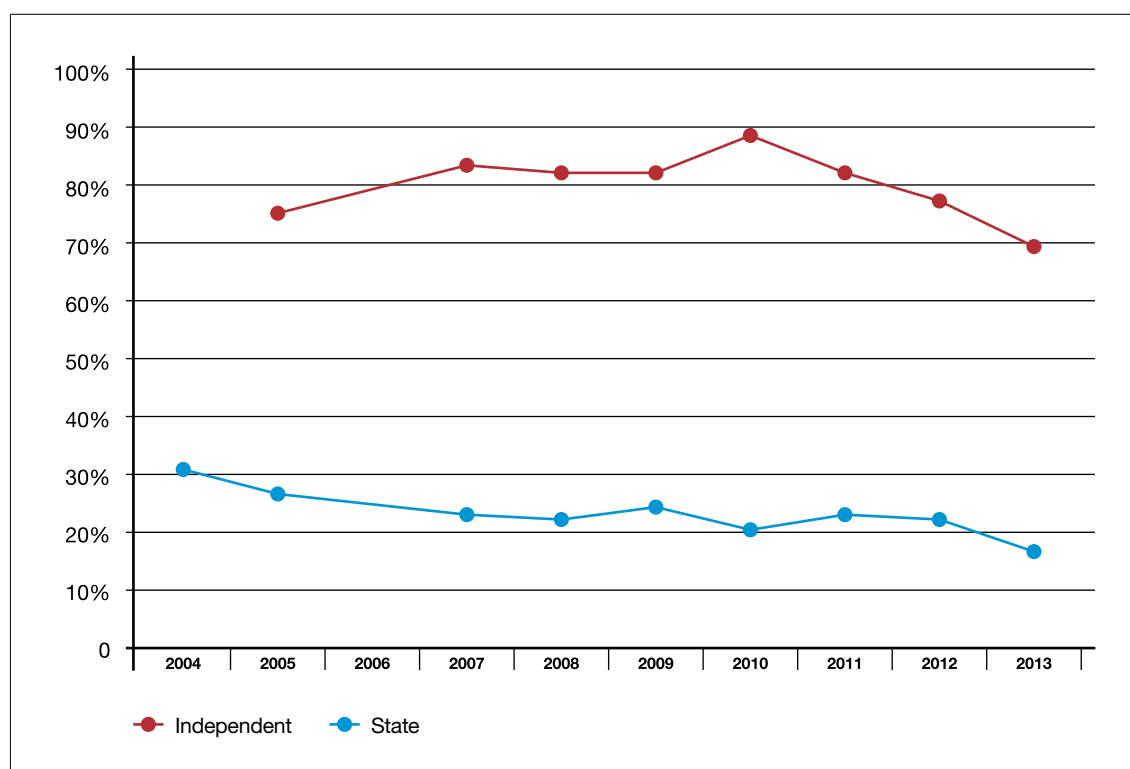
#### Is the study of at least one language compulsory or optional at Key Stage 4?

Independent and state schools remain strongly differentiated in their approach to compulsory language learning in Key Stage 4. While 69 per cent of independent schools make a language compulsory for all pupils, only 16 per cent of state schools do so. In 44 per cent of state schools languages are optional for all pupils, but this is the case in only 14 per cent of independent schools.

#### How has the status of languages in the Key Stage 4 curriculum changed over time?

The proportion of state schools in which the study of a language is compulsory in Key Stage 4 has reached its lowest-ever level of 16 per cent. Independent schools also show a decline in compulsory language learning in Key Stage 4, with only 69 per cent making a language compulsory for all pupils compared with 77 per cent in 2012.<sup>43</sup> However, languages still occupy a much more prominent place in independent schools' curricula.

Figure 34: Schools where languages are compulsory for all in Key Stage 4 (state and independent)\*



\*data for 2004 not available for independent schools, and no data available for either sector for 2006

<sup>43</sup> However, figures supplied by the DfE reproduced in Figure 3 on page 23, show that only 63 per cent of pupils in independent schools sit a GCSE. This reinforces the point that there are many different types of independent school and responses to this survey are biased towards those which are in the highest and second highest quintiles for educational achievement.

Qualitative evidence provided by state school respondents includes the following comments:

*'All except the bottom 15 per cent do one language.'*

*'It depends on whether they opt for the EBacc route.'*

*'The most able (Key Stage 3 core average 6c or above) must take an MFL. It is optional for the rest.'*

In the independent sector, respondents commented as follows:

*'Lower ability pupils may drop MFL in order to concentrate on English.'*

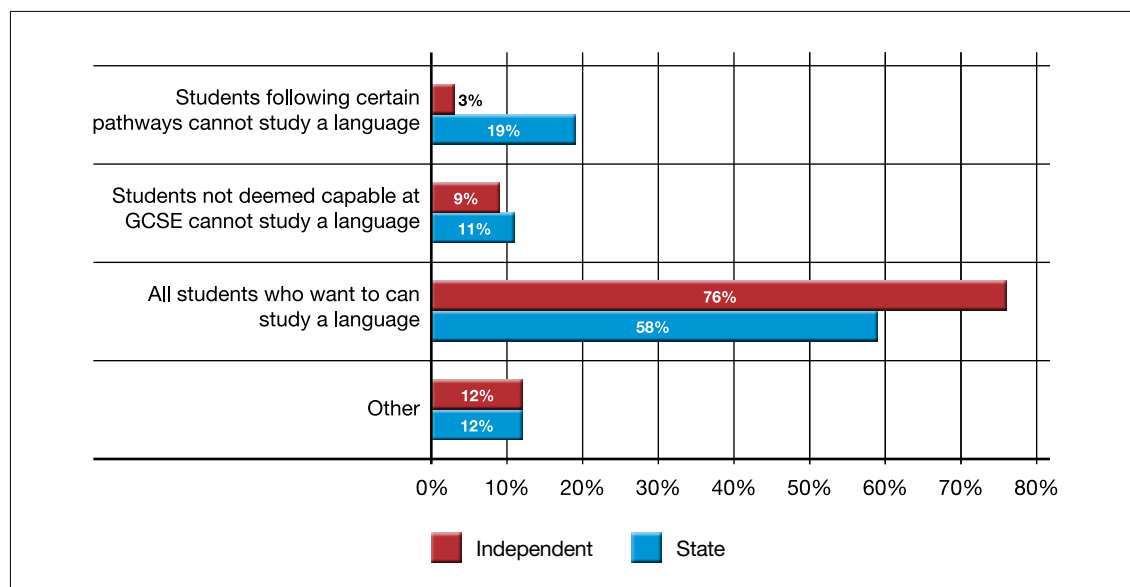
*'A very small percentage of pupils with learning support may stop learning a language at Key Stage 4.'*

*'All Year 10 pupils are encouraged and expected to study at least one language in Key Stage 4. There are a few pupils who we advise not to study a language at GCSE.'*

### Are any students prevented from studying a language at Key Stage 4?

This year's survey provides new data on whether all pupils have **the option** of studying a language at Key Stage 4 – whether all pupils are able to continue learning a language if they wish to do so:

Figure 35: Whether all students are able to study a language at Key Stage 4, state and independent schools



In 19 per cent of state schools (three per cent of independents) pupils following certain pathways are not able to continue with a language, and in 11 per cent of state schools (nine per cent of independents) pupils are not able to continue studying a language if they are not deemed capable of achieving a GCSE even though this is an entitlement subject and schools are required to make courses available to all pupils who wish to study them.

This means that 30 per cent of state schools do not make provision for all pupils to take a language in Key Stage 4 if they wish to do so. The main reason given for this disapplication of certain pupils in state schools is that they were previously disappplied in Key Stage 3 (to focus, for example, on additional tuition in mathematics or English) and therefore have not studied a language before. In a small number of state schools the reason given is simply that the language option is oversubscribed so that not all pupils can take the options they would like, for example:

*'We don't have enough staff to meet the needs of our pupils, so some students do not study languages as too many students have opted for it.'*

Independent schools rarely disapply pupils from studying a language in Key Stage 4 but in those cases where this happens, special educational needs or *'new students who need to have EAL lessons cannot fit MFL into their timetables'* are cited as the reasons.

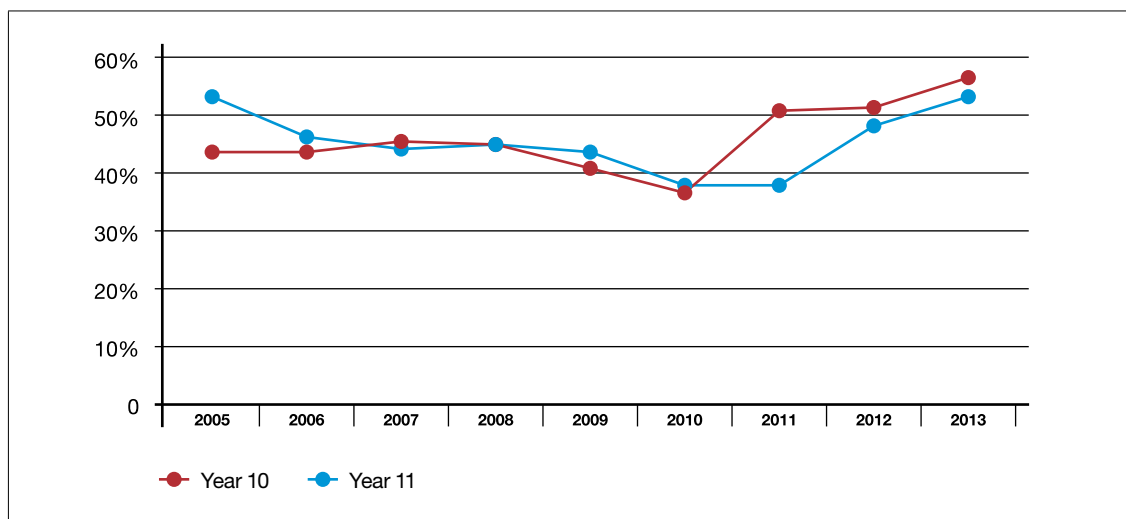
## 7.2 | Take-up

### **What proportion of pupils study at least one language in Key Stage 4?**

As in previous years, schools were asked to indicate the proportion of their pupils taking a language in Years 10 and 11. It is important to track uptake in Year 10 as this is the year when most students start their GCSE courses. The figures provide an indication of trends which are likely to become evident in GCSE figures 18 months later. We would expect figures for Year 11 to mirror those for Year 10 in the previous year, since these are the same pupils in the second year of their course.

This section mainly refers to state schools only, though responses from independent schools are included for comparative purposes where relevant.

Figure 36: State schools with 50 per cent or more pupils taking a language in Years 10 and 11, 2005–2013



The number of state schools where more than 50 per cent of pupils take a language in Key Stage 4 continues to increase. One respondent reported:

*'... a massive increase due to EBacc and guided pathways, with a language compulsory for the top pathway.'*

In last year's Language Trends survey, both quantitative and qualitative data appeared to provide evidence that the impact of the EBacc had stalled after the first year. However, this year's data clearly show that numbers continue to increase in both Years 10 and 11. Comments from respondents show the influence of the EBacc in the increase of take-up at Key Stage 4. For example:

*'There has been a compulsory increase as the more able are guided to EBacc.'*

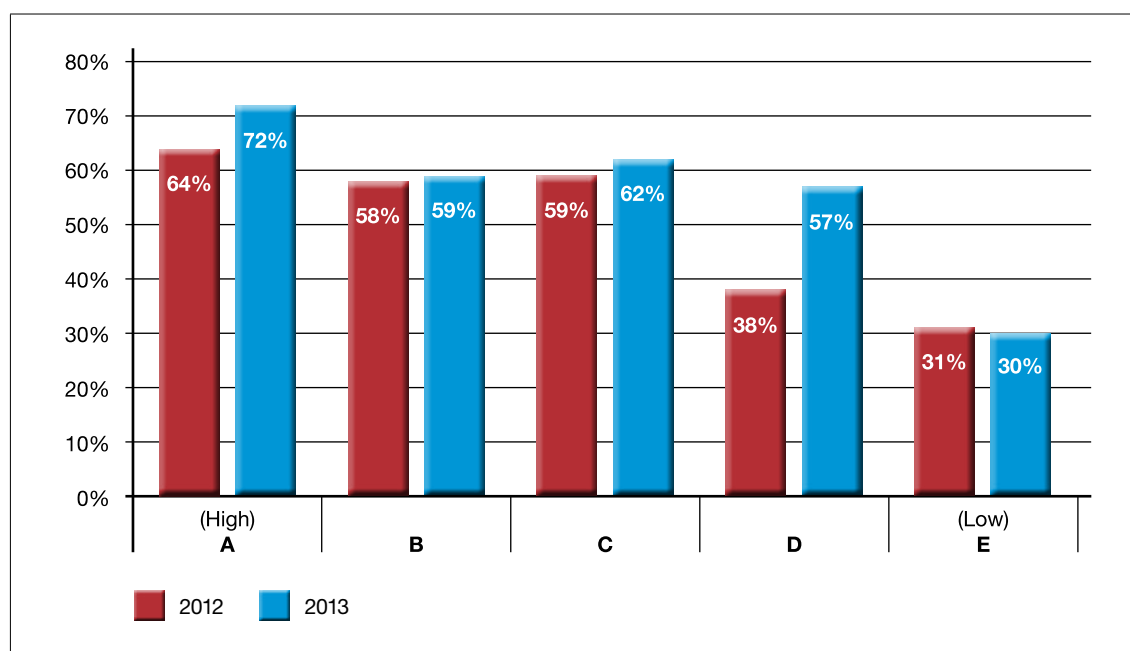
*'Pupils were influenced by media coverage of the EBacc despite the fact that the school placed no emphasis on this. Our curriculum whereby some pupils have the opportunity to take six different GCSE options has meant that languages are more likely to be chosen.'*

### 7.3 | Impact in schools with different characteristics

#### Is higher take-up for languages in Key Stage 4 associated with higher educational achievement overall?

Schools with low overall educational achievement are much less likely than schools with high educational achievement to have more than 50 per cent of their pupils taking a language in Year 10.

Figure 37: Proportion of state schools with 50 per cent or more pupils studying a language in Year 10 by performance quintile, 2012 and 2013



The chart above shows that the proportion of schools with more than 50 per cent of pupils taking a language in Year 10 has increased in every performance quintile **except those in the very lowest category for overall educational achievement**. The most significant increase between 2012 and 2013 has been in schools in the second-lowest band of overall educational achievement (D in the chart above).

#### Is higher take-up for languages associated with socio-economic advantage?

Schools with high proportions of children eligible for free school meals (an indicator of socio-economic disadvantage) are much less likely than schools with more advantaged pupil populations to have more than 50 per cent of their pupils studying a language in Year 10. However, the proportion of schools with more than 50 per cent of pupils studying a language has increased in both categories between 2012 and 2013.

Table 14: Percentage of schools with more than 50 per cent of pupils studying a language in Key Stage 4, by FSM status

	FSM at or below average	FSM above average
2013	66%	39%
2012	61%	31%

### Does academy status affect take-up for languages in Key Stage 4?

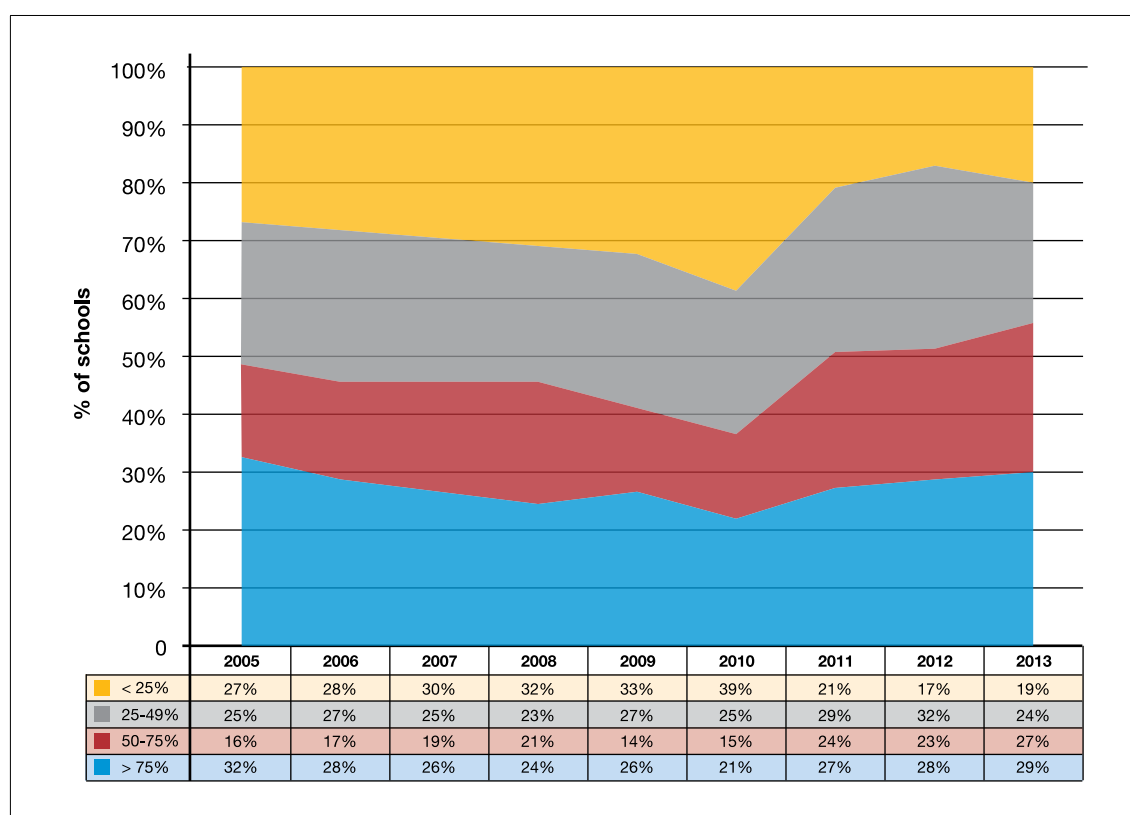
In almost half of sponsored academies (i.e. schools which were set up to replace those judged by Ofsted to be failing) fewer than one quarter of pupils are studying a language in Year 10. Only 20 per cent of non-academy schools and ten per cent of converter academies (i.e. schools which were able to convert to academy status because they were judged by Ofsted to be performing well) have such low take-up for languages.

Table 14: Proportion of schools with fewer than 25 per cent of pupils taking a language in KS4, by academy status

	Total question respondents	% with fewer than 25% studying
Non-academy	183	20%
Converter	174	10%
Sponsored	51	49%

### How has take-up for languages in Key Stage 4 developed since 2005?

Figure 38: Banding of state schools according to take-up for languages in Year 10, 2005–2015





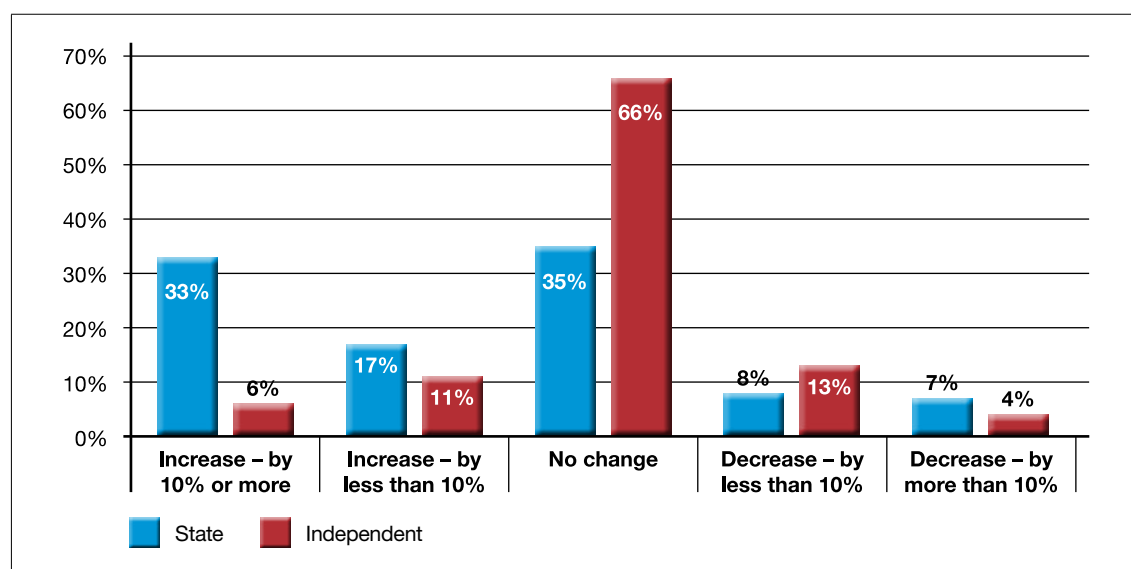
The chart above shows the proportion of schools with different levels of take-up for languages in Year 10 over the period from 2005 to 2013. It shows that the growth between 2012 and 2013 is the result of a greater number of schools (27 per cent, compared with 23 per cent in 2012) entering the 50–75 per cent take-up band (red). In the 25–49 per cent band (grey) the number of schools has gone down from 32 per cent in 2012 to 24 per cent this year. However, the proportion of schools with fewer than 25 per cent of pupils taking a language at Key Stage 4 (yellow) has gone up from 17 per cent in 2012 to 19 per cent in 2013.

This means that, although numbers are increasing overall, around one in five schools has persistently low take-up for languages. The analysis above by Free School Meals (FSM) and overall educational achievement indicates that these are most likely to be schools with large numbers of pupils from deprived backgrounds and with low educational achievement overall.

### Overall, have schools experienced increases or decreases in pupil take-up for languages at Key Stage 4 over the past three years?

A total of 50 per cent of state schools report an increase over the past three years in the numbers of pupils taking one or more languages at Key Stage 4, and in 33 per cent of schools this increase is by ten per cent or more. In schools where languages are optional in Key Stage 4, 56 per cent report an increase in take-up. However, this is a smaller proportion than in 2012 when 69 per cent of such schools reported increases. In 2013, schools where languages were optional in Key Stage 4 were more likely than they were in 2012 to report no change in numbers (25 per cent compared to 14 per cent).

Figure 39: Overall changes in pupil uptake for languages in Key Stage 4 (state and independent schools)



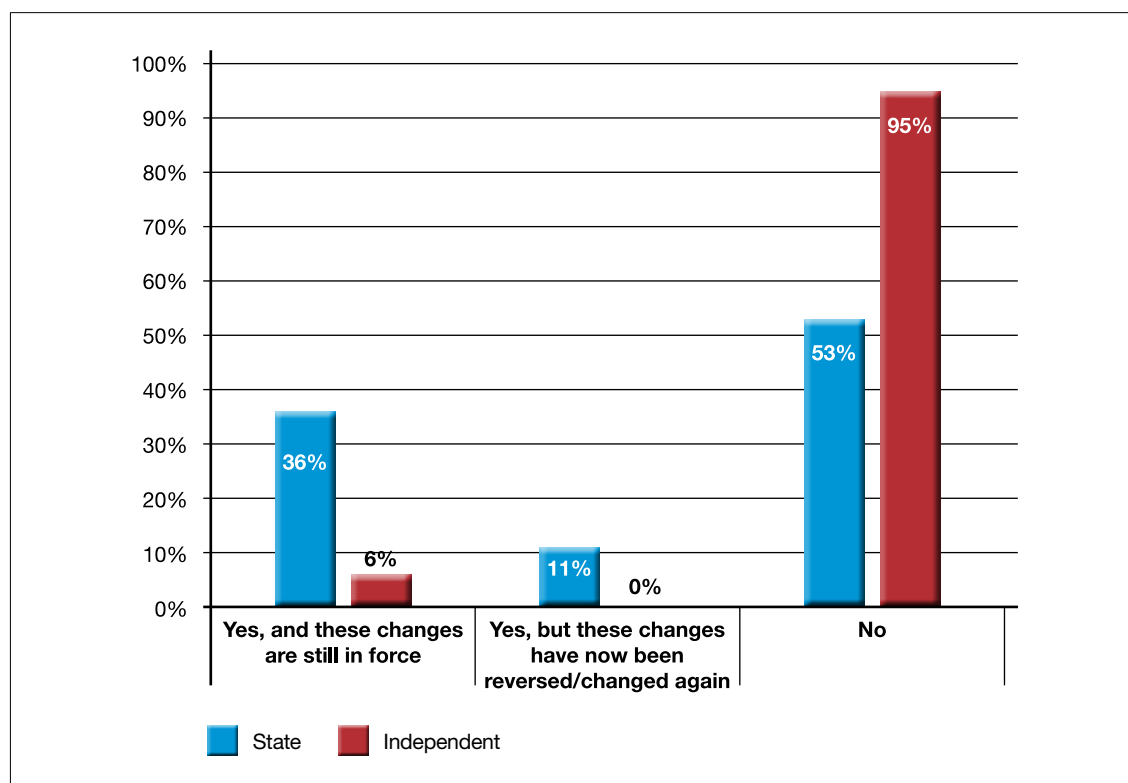
In the independent sector there is no evidence of significant movement compared to previous years but uptake is much higher anyway. Some independent schools say they have seen a decrease in take-up at Key Stage 4 and the reasons cited in comments by respondents are the higher numbers of international pupils joining the school who need additional support as well as an increase in the numbers of UK-based pupils starting at the school who have learning difficulties.

There is a tendency for sponsored academies more than other schools to report an increase of ten per cent or more, but this is not a significant tendency. There is no noticeable pattern across performance quintiles but there is across FSM quintiles. Schools with greater numbers of FSM pupils are more likely to report an increase in take-up.

### 7.4 | Changes in response to the EBacc and their impact

**Did schools make changes to languages provision in Key Stage 4 as a result of policies relating to the EBacc and changes to performance tables?**

Figure 40: Whether schools made changes to languages provision as a result of the EBacc (state and independent schools)



A total of 47 per cent of state schools who responded to this survey report that they have made changes to languages provision as a result of the introduction of the EBacc. However, 11 per cent say they have now reversed these changes or made further adjustments, giving the following reasons:

*'The increase is because of the EBacc option – in the first year it was compulsory but it is now optional.'*

*'Students are unsure if the EBacc is still in effect and therefore numbers have dropped at Key Stage 4.'*

Very few independent schools have made changes to their languages provision because of the EBacc, because their provision already meets or exceeds the EBacc criteria.

While many schools, particularly in the state sector, have embraced the new EBacc and encouraged or required pupils to take the range of GCSEs which will give them the EBacc, a number of schools also report that they have not made changes to the programmes of study at Key Stage 4 as a result of the government's initiative. The reasons given in the free comments include:

*'Because our option structure expects students to take a language.'*

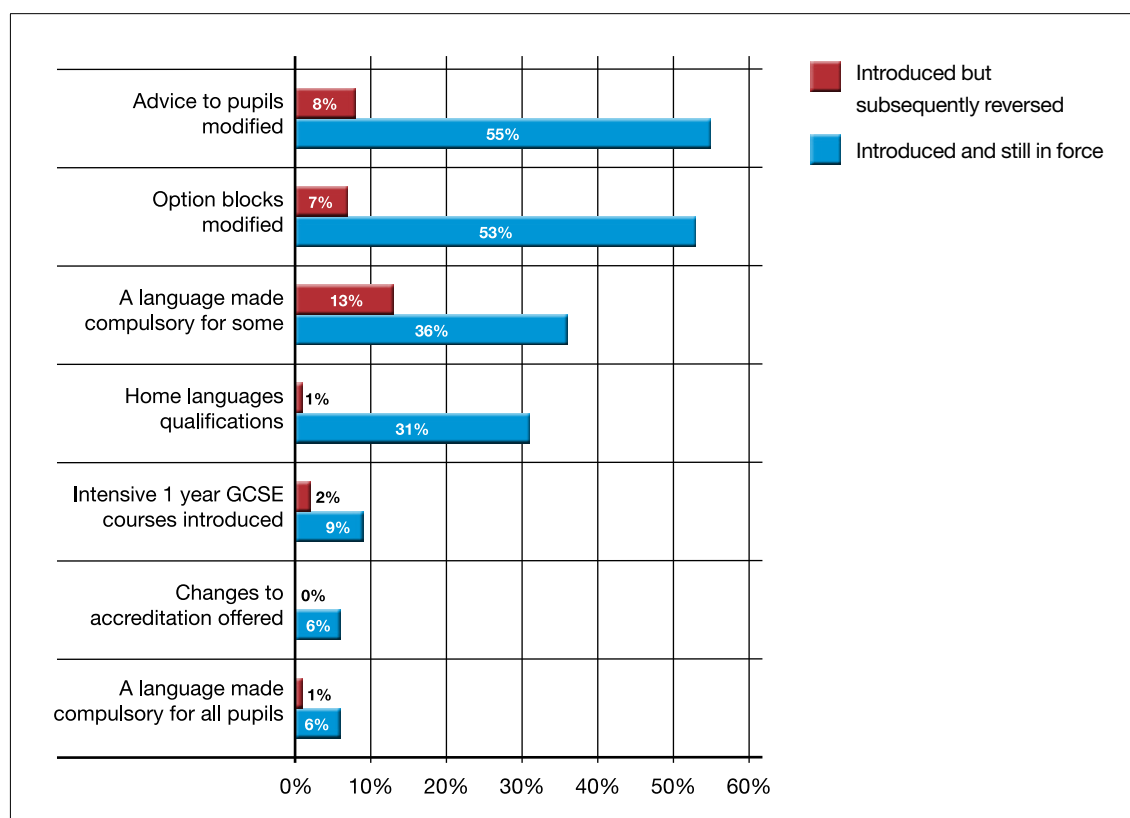
*'EBacc is not a school priority.'*

*'The Senior Leadership Team did not consider the EBacc to be an important reason for curriculum change.'*

### What measures did schools introduce, and are they still in force?

The most frequent types of change introduced are modification of option blocks and advice to pupils. This confirms findings from the 2012 survey. A total of 49 per cent of schools taking part in the 2013 survey made a language compulsory for some pupils, but 13 per cent (25 out of 93 in this sample) have subsequently reversed it.

Figure 41: Measures introduced in response to the EBacc, state schools\*



\*Multiple responses permitted

Qualitative evidence provided in the free comments sections of the survey includes the following:

*'The importance of MFL was made clear to students for the EBacc and future plans, particularly the best universities.'*

*'More encouragement towards EBacc route.'*

The change which has most frequently been sustained, introduced by 31 per cent of schools with only one school having subsequently reversed the change, is that of improving opportunities for pupils to take a qualification in their home language. Comments include:

*'Arabic has also been introduced due to demand predominantly from Muslim students.'*

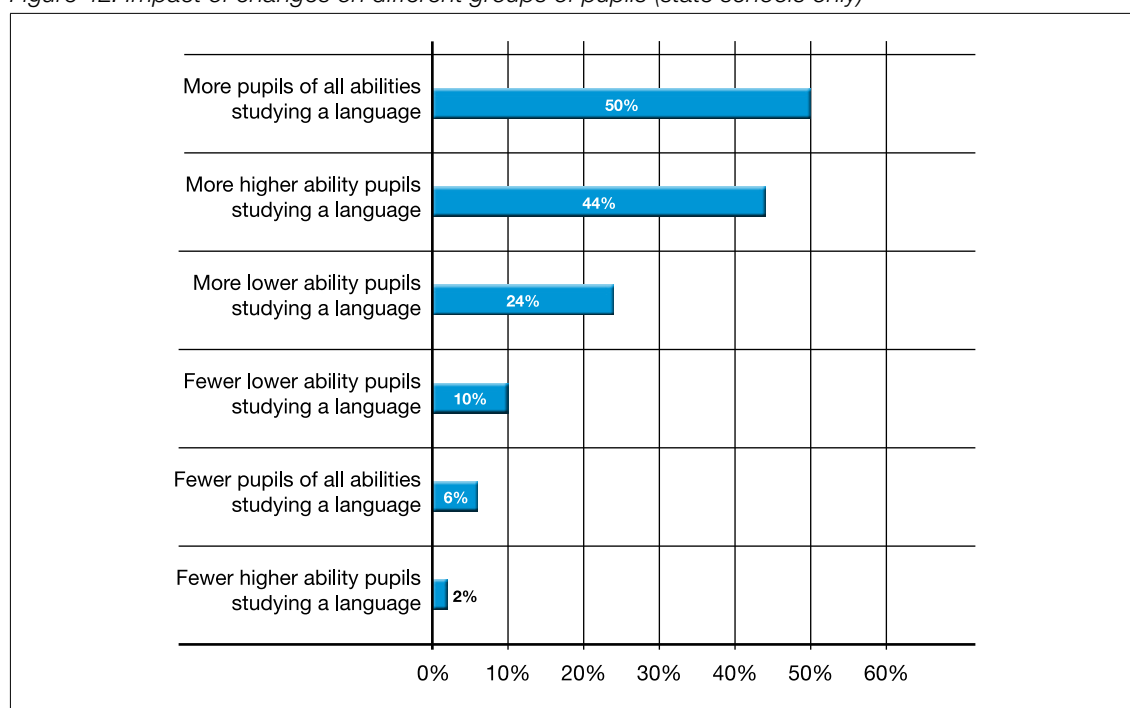
*'We... have had students doing GCSEs in German, Greek, Mandarin, Portuguese, Turkish, Russian as well as A level Mandarin and Russian.'*

The qualitative data gathered in response to this question in this year's survey confirms that schools have preferred the route of encouragement over that of obligation, for example:

*'We have encouraged students to realise the importance but we are not in the business of forcing students into choices that aren't right for them!'*

### What has been the impact of these changes on different groups of pupils?

Figure 42: Impact of changes on different groups of pupils (state schools only)\*



\*Multiple responses permitted

In response to being asked what the impact of changes has been on different groups of pupils, 50 per cent report that more pupils of all abilities are now studying a language in Key Stage 4, while 44 per cent say that the impact has been on higher ability pupils:

*'We make a recommendation that a language is compulsory based on the student profile but for other students it is still optional.'*

Some 24 per cent say the impact has been on lower ability pupils, although there is evidence that this has not necessarily been successful:

*'Some very reluctant language learners have been forced to take a language and this has not gone down well with some parents and made life difficult for teachers at times.'*

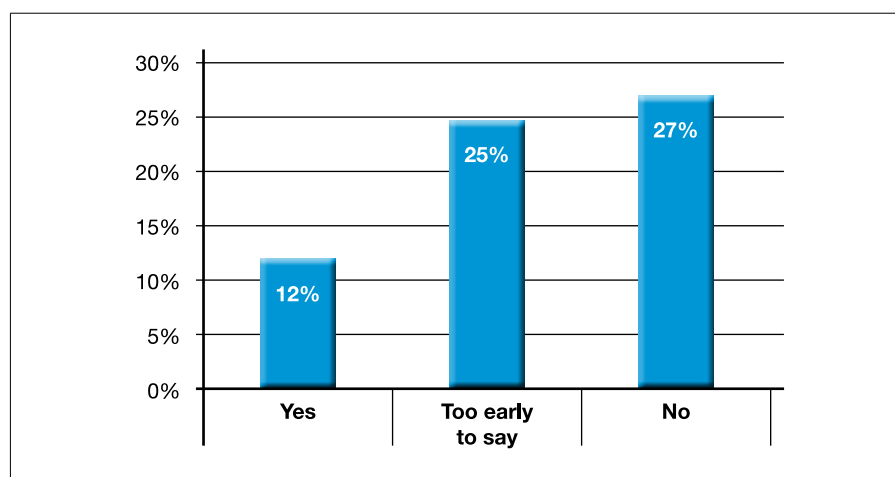
*'Our least able now have to take GCSE rather than NVQ. As a result they are demotivated and feel that they cannot achieve. This has had a huge effect on motivation and attitude to languages. As the demands for memory skill in GCSE is so high, the least able have simply given up.'*

We can conclude that although the EBacc has had greater impact on higher than on lower ability pupils, it has had an impact on take-up – if not always on achievement – among pupils of all abilities.

### Have increases at Key Stage 4 also led to increases in numbers taking languages post-16?

This was a new question in the 2013/14 survey, designed to gauge the impact of the EBacc policy on take-up for languages in the sixth form and beyond.

Figure 43: Whether increases in take-up of languages at Key Stage 4 have also led to increases at post-16 (state schools only)



There is not yet any strong evidence that the EBacc is improving take-up further up the school. Only 12 per cent of schools say that the improvements in take-up that have been brought about as a result of the EBacc have also led to increases in numbers taking languages post-16. A total of 27 per cent say this has not been the outcome and 25 per cent feel it is too early to say. Some of the comments in response to this question are as follows:

*'Languages are still perceived as a difficult option and not an obvious choice for future career prospects.'*

*'Too few students wishing to take a language post-16 – courses will not run with fewer than nine students.'*

*'Since students take their exams in Year 9, by the time they get to post-16, they have not had any language teaching for two years. I am currently discussing this with the Senior Leadership Team.'*

*'Languages at A level are still viewed by the overwhelming majority of pupils, even high-ability students, as too difficult.'*

*'We are not allowed to offer Key Stage 5 languages to groups of fewer than six.'*

*'We have to put pupils off taking AS languages. They will get worse grades than they could get in other subjects, which is just not fair. We only let the real high-flying linguists continue, and even they struggle at AS. A2 grades are good, but AS in two terms is impossible.'*

*'A level French has gone from three to ten students.'*

*'We have had a big focus on promotion of Key Stage 5 languages but the constant feedback from pupils is that it is seen to be much harder than the other AS subjects.'*

*'Fewer students are opting to study French but we have increased numbers for Russian.'*

For further findings on the situation of languages post-16, see Chapter 8.

### 7.5 | Key points

- The EBacc is continuing to have a positive effect on the take-up of languages in Key Stage 4 and the number of schools with more than 50 per cent of their pupils taking a language has continued to increase. As many as 50 per cent of state schools report an increase over the past three years in the numbers of pupils taking at least one language at Key Stage 4, and in 33 per cent of schools this increase is by ten per cent or more. However, in about one in five schools, take-up for languages is still persistently low (below 25 per cent) and there is no indication of this increasing.
- Although higher levels of take-up of languages are still associated with more advantaged schools and those with higher educational achievement overall, the EBacc is having a positive impact on the take-up of languages at Key Stage 4 in schools across the socio-economic spectrum. Except for schools in the lowest quintile for educational performance, pupil numbers have increased in schools across the range of educational performance and most noticeably in the second lowest performance quintile. In 49 per cent of sponsored academies fewer than 25 per cent of pupils are studying a language in Key Stage 4. However, only ten per cent of converter academies have such a low level of pupil take-up for languages in Key Stage 4.
- The increase in numbers has largely been the result of persuasion, or of compulsion only for certain groups of pupils. The proportion of state schools for whom the study of a language is compulsory in Key Stage 4 has reached its lowest-ever level at 16 per cent (down from 22 per cent in 2012). The proportion in the independent sector also continues to decline (69 per cent, down from 77 per cent in 2012).
- Some 30 per cent of state schools do not make provision for all pupils to take a language at Key Stage 4 even though as an entitlement subject schools are required to make courses available to all pupils who wish to study them.
- A total of 31 per cent of schools have used the EBacc as an opportunity to encourage or recommend students to take a qualification in their home language.
- Some 12 per cent of schools say that the increase in pupils taking languages at GCSE has also boosted numbers for languages post-16. However, 27 per cent say this has not happened and 25 per cent say it is too early to say. There therefore is no sign yet of any widespread positive impact of the EBacc on take-up of languages post-16.

# 8

## Languages post-16

Data on the study of languages beyond Key Stage 4 are of particular interest since they provide indicators about potential university applications for degree-level study of languages and the numbers of students with good linguistic skills entering the world of work or being able to use languages to enhance their higher-level studies in other academic subjects.

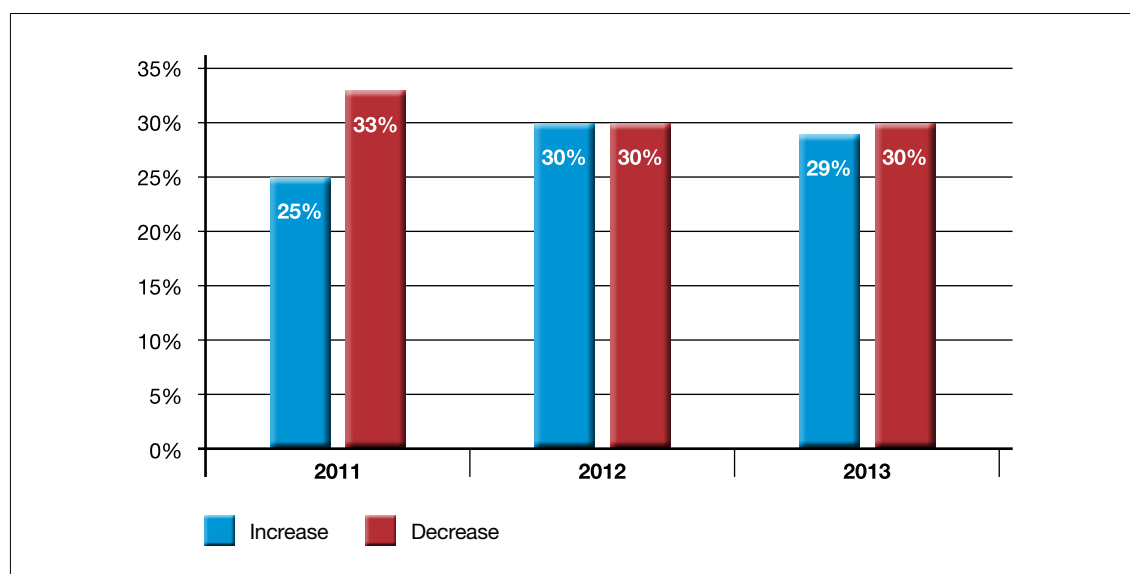
### 8.1 | Trends in take-up

**Overall, have schools experienced increases or decreases in pupil take-up of languages at post-16/sixth form over the last three years?**

Since the situations in the state and independent sectors are very different from one another, the data for each sector are provided separately below.

#### State schools

Figure 44: State schools reporting increases or decreases in pupil numbers for languages post-16, 2011–2013



The proportion of state schools reporting decreases in take-up of languages post-16 over the past three years (30 per cent) is mirrored almost exactly by the proportion reporting increases (29 per cent). These proportions were very similar in 2012 and 2011 when the same question was asked. The qualitative evidence gathered from respondents in this survey shows that the numbers of post-16 students opting to do languages at A level are smaller than they are for other subjects:

*'We used to have two groups in French in AS three years ago but now have only one group. Our numbers of those continuing with languages are quite low compared with subjects such as humanities, science, English and maths.'*

School leaders can therefore find themselves in a position where they have no choice but to withdraw the option of A level languages study on the grounds that it is not financially viable to run extremely small groups:

*'Due to the need to attract larger groups to justify the cost, we are unable to have languages at post-16.'*

*'German has always run with five or six pupils but now the Senior Leadership Team are insisting it has to have eight to ten to be financially viable so it is currently being taught in a consortium where the other school have a supportive SLT who will run it with five pupils without issue.'*

Some respondents report instances of schools grouping together with others in their area in order to be able to provide A level languages, for example:

*'As a grammar school we do attract students from local comprehensive schools as many of them do not offer post-16 language courses.'*

*'Due to small group sizes, we now teach languages A levels to students from five secondary schools. This ensures we have viable groups.'*

This evidence may go some way to explaining why some schools report a decrease in A level languages and others report an increase. Interestingly, one respondent noted an increase in the numbers of students taking a language at A level, due to:

*'... external students joining sixth form – most with some time spent living abroad giving them an advantage.'*

Another reported an *'increase due to EAL students'* who are keen to achieve an A level in their first language.

In state schools early entry GCSE in Year 9 or 10 impacts on the levels of take-up for languages study at post-16 level. The rationale is that if pupils take their language GCSE early, this then frees them up to focus all their attention on 'more important' GCSE subjects in Years 10 and 11. However, the impact of such practice is described by respondents in this year's survey as follows:

*'Language uptake post-16 has been affected by the early-entry policy at GCSE. Uptake should increase with the removal of this.'*

*'We lost students at Key Stage 5 for French and German because we did early entry for the more able who completed their GCSE early in Year 10 and then effectively gave up languages making the chances of them picking them up again in Year 12 virtually zero.'*

*'Students who were encouraged to take GCSE French in Year 10 for a one-year course were then reluctant to do it as an A level after a year break.'*

*'As pupils can take a GCSE in one year at any time during Years 9/10/11, we find it hard to maintain contact with them and provide continuity... by the time they get to Year 12 it can be three years since their GCSE so uptake in MFL is low.'*



Those state schools that have seen decreases in the numbers of their students opting to take a language at A level provide illuminating qualitative evidence through their comments to the questions in the survey about post-16 provision. Some of these are provided below:

*'... currently we only have Turkish A level.'*

*'Many schools no longer run post-16 courses, so pupils join our school – Russell Group university recommendations on taking MFL at AS have encouraged more to continue.'*

*'We attribute this [decrease in take-up] to an increased take-up of maths and sciences due to students' – and more importantly parents' – belief that they are more useful for future job prospects. Another factor is that it is harder to get an A/A\* in a language than in other subjects.'*

*'The reputation of the A level (e.g. lack of A\*s, perceived difficulty) means that many able students are put off.'*

*'The requirements for A level in terms of numbers for a viable group has increased, so we are not sure if we can run A level German in future.'*

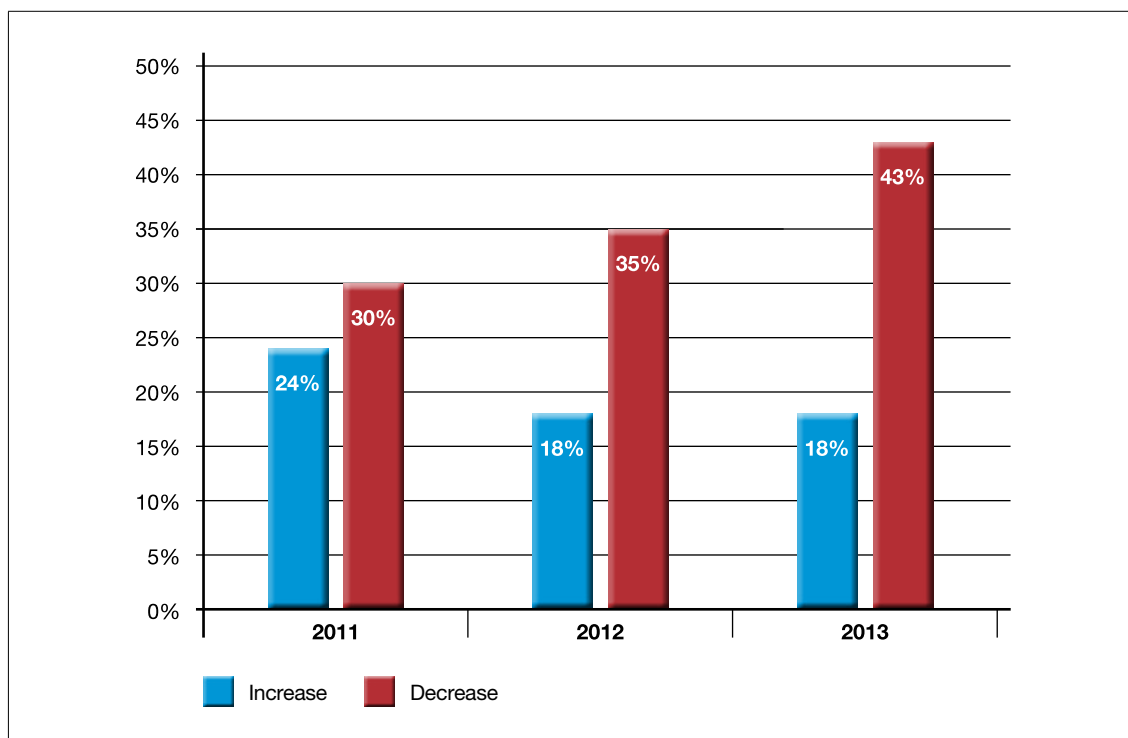
*'Languages are seen as difficult (even if desired) and therefore they give it a miss for a subject that is more likely to yield an A.'*

*'There is greater pressure to run only those subjects at Key Stage 5 which have 'viable' groups. This figure varies for each subject. If only one or two pupils opt, then the subject does not run.'*

### **Independent schools**

While in the state sector declines in numbers in some schools are compensated for by increases in others, in the independent sector this is not the case and the overall picture is one of decline in post-16 take-up of languages. A total of 43 per cent of independent schools report that their numbers studying a language at this level have declined over the past three years, whereas only 18 per cent report an increase. This is of particular concern since the independent sector supplies a disproportionate number of A level candidates for languages (see Chapter 3).

Figure 45: Independent schools reporting increases or decreases in pupil numbers for languages post-16, 2011–2013



Two years ago, in 2011, the proportion of independent schools reporting a decline in the numbers of post-16 students for languages was 30 per cent. This increased to 35 per cent in 2012 and has now increased to 43 per cent in the most recent survey. At the same time, the number of schools reporting an increase in student numbers at this level has dropped from 24 per cent to 18 per cent. This very rapid deterioration of the situation is consistent with the A level entry figures provided in Chapter 3. This confirms indications from the exam data that the recent decline seen in A level language entries is mainly attributable to the shrinkage of language study post-16 in the independent sector.<sup>44</sup>

Where independent schools have seen increases in the numbers of students taking a language post-16, this is often attributed to a change in post-16 examinations:

*'We made the switch to IB from A level. Languages are now compulsory for all.'*

Respondents to this survey from the independent sector report that the principal reasons for the decline are the difficulty in obtaining A grades at A level (perceived to be easier in other subjects), and the perception that languages are not as useful for eventual careers as STEM subjects:

*'Languages are deemed too difficult and harder to achieve a high grade in, even if you are good at them. In order to guarantee a grade for getting into university it is better to choose psychology/maths/sciences – very frustrating.'*

*'The pressure from STEM subjects is acutely felt. Parents and advisers push maths/science ahead of humanities; STEM subjects are seen as inherently advantageous for university and jobs.'*

<sup>44</sup> The number of entries for A level languages declined by 650 between 2012 and 2013 in the independent sector, and by 474 in the state-funded sector (including both schools and colleges). See pages 26–31.

*'... why study a language if you're not going to do it at university when you can get the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) points/grades much more easily in other subjects. There is absolutely no incentive to do it.'*

*'Students perceive a language A level as difficult and due to some of the erratic marking over the past few years they have seen bright pupils gaining As and A\*s in other subjects but coming out with one grade lower in Spanish. They do not want to risk it with more and more AAA offers being made by universities.'*

As noted in the 2012 survey, the knock-on effect of an unsatisfactory assessment regime at GCSE is also seen as contributing to the decline:

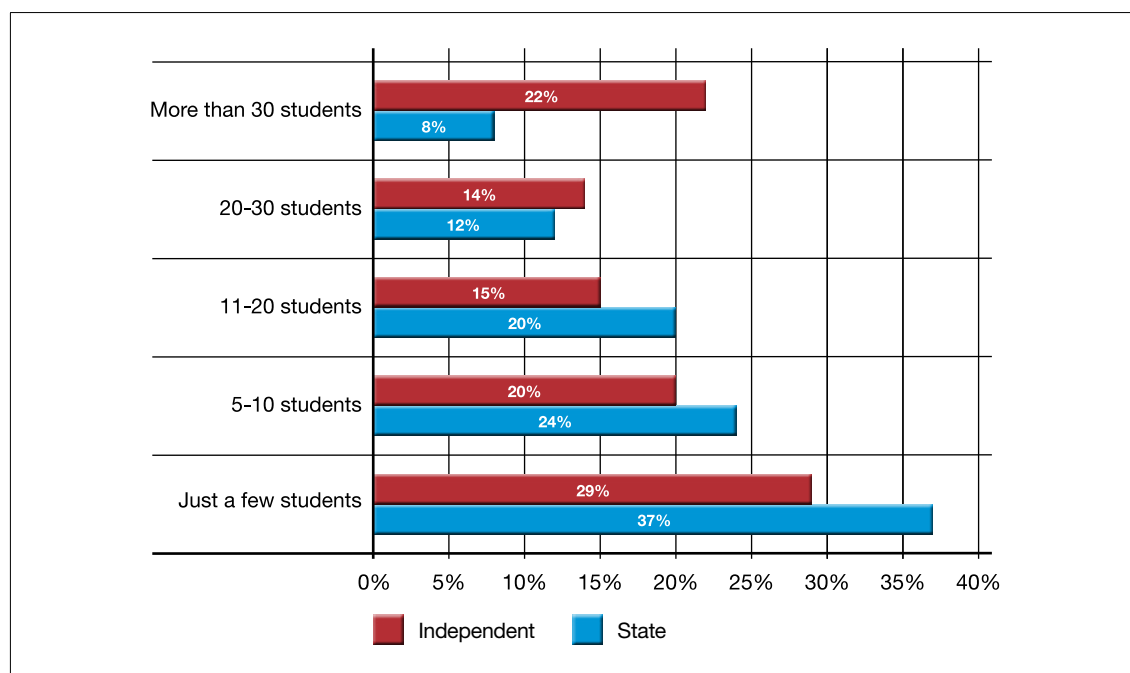
*'Students can prioritise other subjects and "learn" their languages at the last minute, by getting all the help they need to produce 300 words for Controlled Assessment – students know they don't really know any French etc. Students perceive other subjects as more important to gain entry to university and to higher paid jobs. The status of science / maths continues to dominate among many able students. Other students prefer "useful" or "sexy" subjects such as business studies, psychology.'*

## 8.2 | Continuation rates from AS to A2

### How many students on average normally enrol for language courses at AS level?

In both the independent and state sectors, schools are more likely to recruit smaller rather than larger numbers of students for AS languages. However, more than one in five (22 per cent) independent schools recruit more than 30 students for AS languages in any one year. The state sector is more likely to recruit smaller numbers than the independent sector.

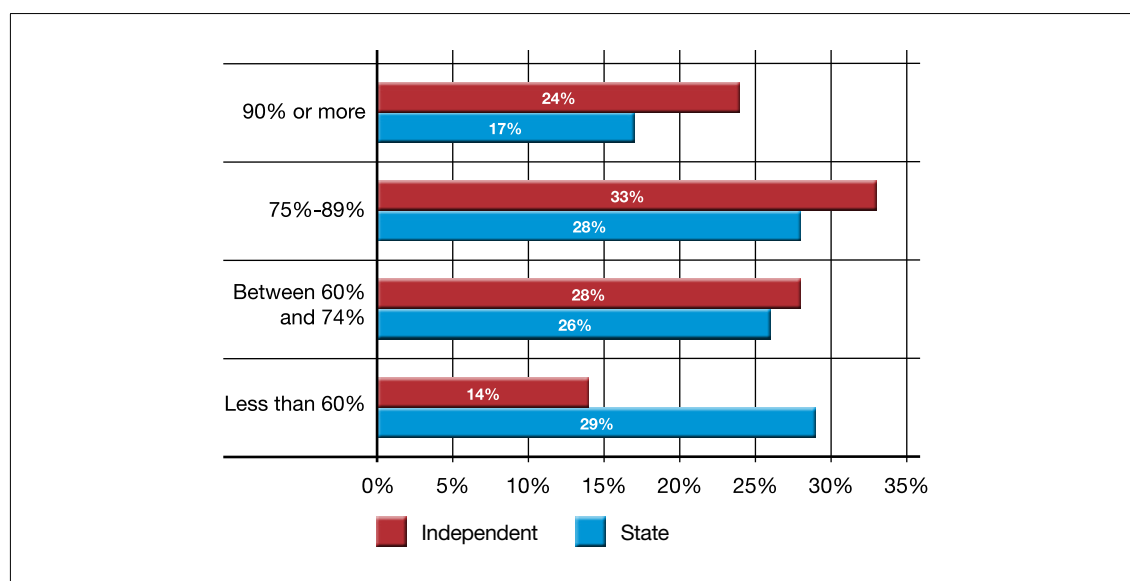
Figure 46: Numbers of students enrolling for AS language courses (state and independent schools)



### What proportion of these normally continue to A2?

Research commissioned by the DfE in 2012 showed that German, French and Spanish had 69 per cent, 70 per cent and 73 per cent progression rates from AS to A2 across the country as a whole.<sup>45</sup> The results of this survey show that state schools are much more likely to have smaller numbers of students continuing on to A2 in language subjects. In 29 per cent of state schools, fewer than 60 per cent of AS candidates progress to A2, whereas in the independent sector, 24 per cent of schools see 90 per cent continuing to A2.

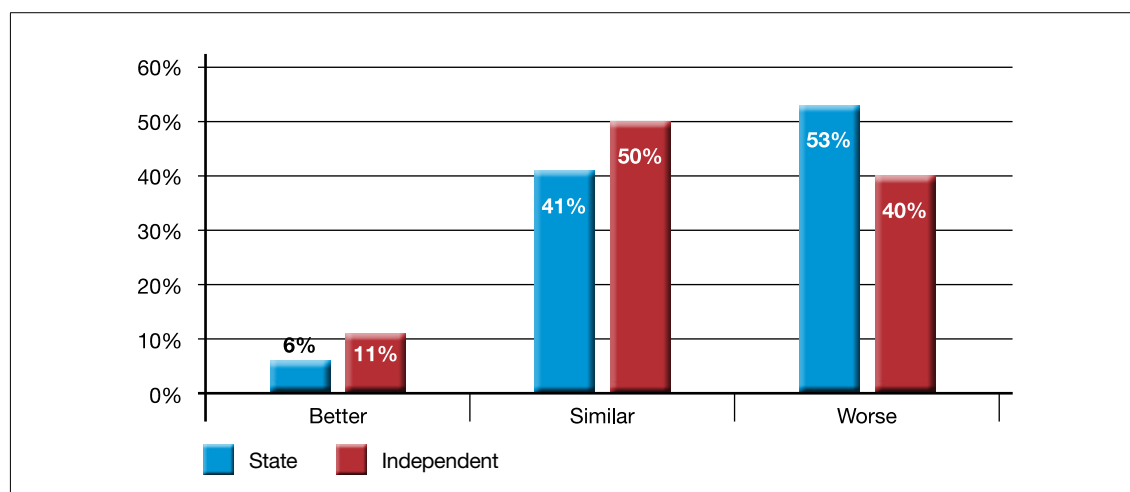
Figure 47: Proportions of AS language students continuing to A2 (state and independent schools)



### How do schools find continuation rates for languages compare with those for other subjects in their school?

Very few schools in either sector find that continuation rates for languages are better than those for other subjects, but state schools are more likely to report lower continuation rates than for other subjects.

Figure 48: Reported comparisons between continuation rates for languages and other subjects (state and independent schools)



<sup>45</sup> DfE (2012)

The proportion of schools in both sectors reporting lower continuation rates for languages than for other subjects has gone up over the past year. In 2012, 47 per cent of state schools said they were worse, compared with 53 per cent in the current survey; and 31 per cent of independent schools said they were worse, compared with 40 per cent from the latest figures. The part of this question, which asked survey respondents to comment on the reasons why their students are less likely to continue with their study of a language to A2 than is the case with other subjects, produced evidence of:

- the increase in difficulty between GCSE and AS level study which many students struggle to cope with
- the relative difficulty and uncertainty of achieving high grades in languages when students often need to be confident of their ability to achieve A grades to secure university places
- the perceived lack of value of languages in comparison with STEM subjects.

A selection of comments from respondents is provided below:

*'Universities do not make it clear that AS/A2 MFL is a valued subject in UCAS application so pupils always prioritise maths, sciences etc.'*

*'The leap from GCSE to AL is huge – results at AS are often disappointing but if we can keep them until A2 we get fantastic grades.'*

*'Pupils often choose AS languages as their 'fourth' subject as so often they are potential medics/vets/lawyers. They find the jump from GCSE to AS so hard, that this can often dissuade them from continuing to A2.'*

*'Due to the gap between GCSE and AS, and also the accelerated one-year GCSE, pupils do not tend to do as well in MFL as in other subjects so this tends to be the one they drop.'*

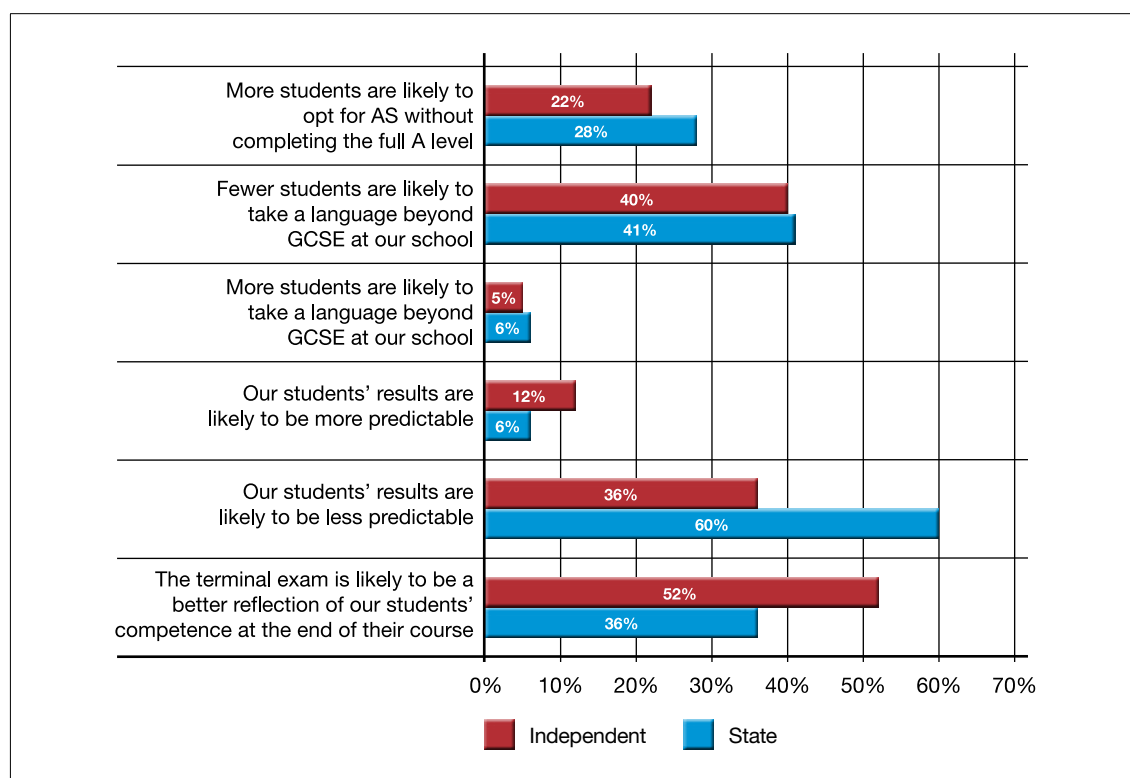
*'Languages are not seen as important and also the results are very unpredictable. Students want to take subjects where they can be assured of a good grade e.g. maths, sciences.'*

### 8.3 | Response to forthcoming reforms to A level

#### What impact do respondents envisage the reforms to A level will have on languages in their schools?

The responses to this question show that very few schools believe that the proposed changes will impact positively on take-up:

Figure 49: Reported likely impact of A level reforms (state and independent schools)\*



\*Multiple responses permitted

A total of 52 per cent of independent schools and 36 per cent of state schools believe that the reforms to A levels will mean that A levels will be a better reflection of students' competence at the end of the course, for example:

*'Two years to build up confidence, lexis and grammar seems more sensible than a bizarre half-way exam that is often marked with variable quality year on year.'*

However, significant proportions of respondents from both types of school envisage that the new exams will have a negative impact on the take-up of languages by post-16 students:

*'It will be harder for students to have a realistic idea of where they are. The AS half way through the course was a useful staging post – it gave students a confidence boost or a wake-up call, as appropriate. The added uncertainty, coupled with the widespread perception that it is harder to do well in languages, will make students less willing to consider a language.'*

A total of 41 per cent of state schools and 40 per cent of independent schools foresee fewer students taking a language beyond GCSE, and 28 per cent of state schools and 22 per cent of independent schools think that more students are likely to opt for AS without completing the full A level. Very few see the changes making students' results easier to predict. As many as 60 per cent of state schools and 36 per cent of independents think that students' results will be less predictable under the new regime. One respondent writes:

*'... I am not sure how much more unpredictable the results can be. I am totally dumbfounded by the marking criteria and the evident discrepancies between our experienced teachers' assessments and the board's results.'*

Some teachers welcome the reforms to A level:

*'I think that the structure of the exam suits languages in that pupils struggle to reach the required standard in the eight months of teaching between GCSE and AS.'*

However, others express concerns that the already small numbers of students opting for languages at A level will decrease even further:

*'I think it would be disastrous for the uptake of languages if the AS was removed as a half-way stage. I can see that the number going for the full A2 level will decrease even more.'*

*'We suspect even fewer will commit to a two-year course. Students tend to like to choose a second year of study on the basis of what they gained after AS.'*

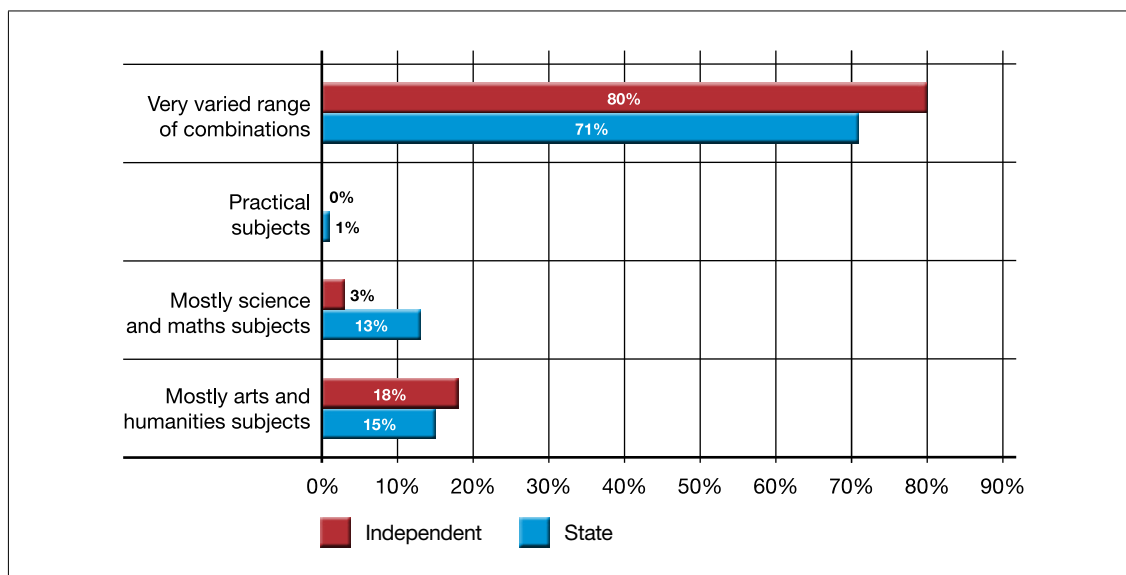
*'I am concerned that the low numbers in languages may drop further as students starting the course will now choose other subjects knowing that they cannot just do an AS rather dropping the subject after Year 12. Numbers will not allow us to run both AS courses and A2 courses.'*

## 8.4 | Combinations with other subjects

### What other subjects do students typically combine with A level languages?

Most schools are not able to generalise about combinations of other subjects chosen by their students alongside languages at A level. However, the quantitative results show that very few pupils combine a language with practical subjects such as design and technology. In the state sector students are more likely to combine languages with science and mathematics subjects than they are in the independent sector.

Figure 50: Subjects typically combined with A level languages (state and independent schools)



### 8.5 | Key points

- The numbers of students choosing to study a language at A level in the independent sector are declining at an alarmingly fast rate, with 43 per cent of independent schools reporting declines compared with 35 per cent in 2012 and 30 per cent in 2011. This is in reaction to what is perceived as harsh and unpredictable grading by exam boards and the need of students to be more certain of achieving the highest grades to secure university places. In the state sector numbers are more stable, although where numbers of students wishing to study a language at A level are very low, schools report that they are not able to offer courses because they are not financially viable.
- Schools report that continuation rates from AS to A2 – already lower for languages than for many other subjects – are getting worse. Schools say this is due to the increase in the level of difficulty between GCSE and AS level and the difficulty of predicting grades at A2. However, respondents to this survey do not believe that the move to a terminal exam at A2 will improve either predictability or take-up and only five per cent of state schools (six per cent of independent schools) believe that the reforms to A level will improve take-up from GCSE.
- At A level few students choose to combine languages with STEM subjects, and this is especially so in the independent sector. Languages are not seen as so valuable as STEM subjects either for future employment or university entry.



## 9

## Trends in relation to specific languages taught in English schools

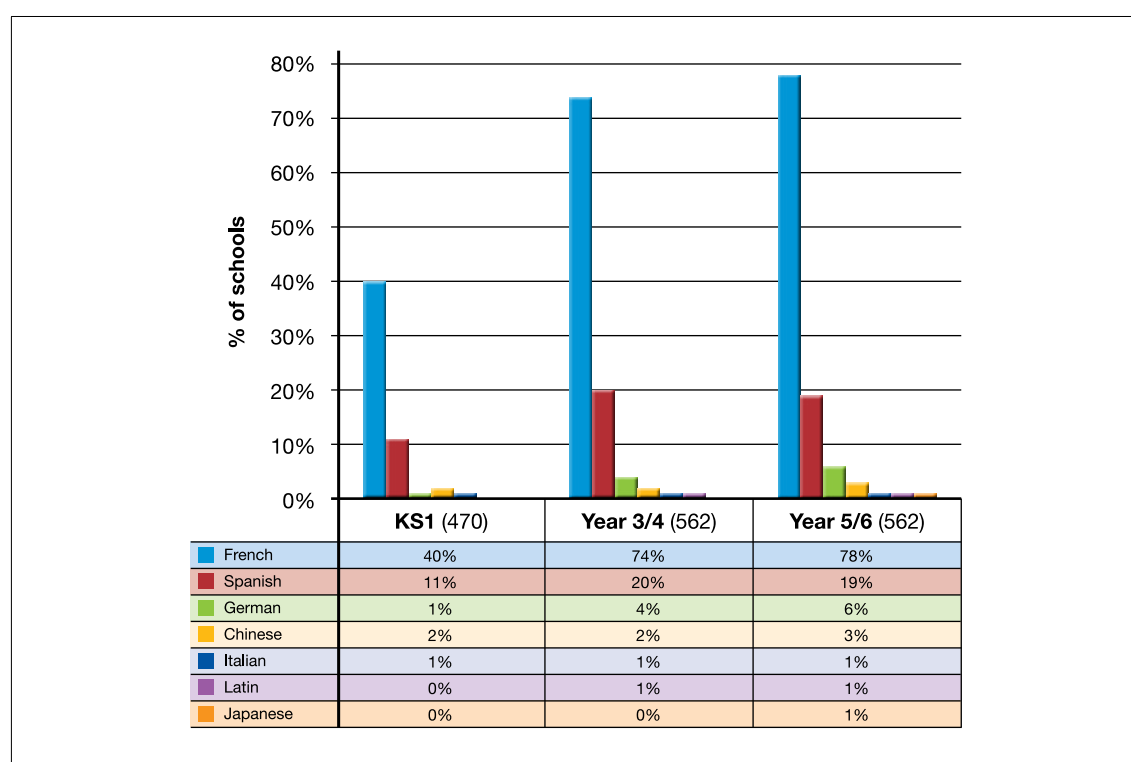
Examination data indicate that there may be some major shifts under way in provision or take-up for different languages. In the context of the introduction of compulsory language learning in Key Stage 2, the need to provide continuity of learning for pupils throughout their schooling, and the ongoing debate on which languages the UK most needs, this chapter explores provision and take-up for different languages at all levels and phases in the school system.

### 9.1 | Primary schools

#### Which languages do schools teach within class time?

French is easily the language most commonly offered by primary schools, followed by Spanish.

Figure 51: Languages offered within class time in primary schools, 2013\*



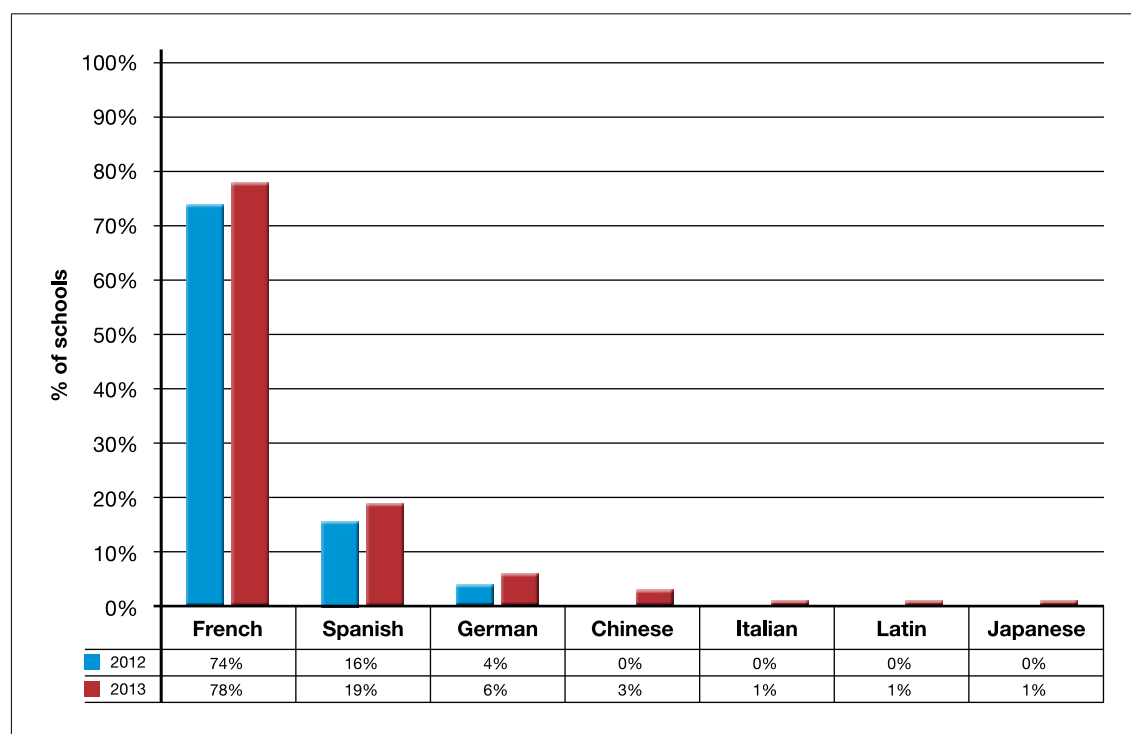
\*Multiple responses permitted

The chart in Figure 51 is based on the total number of schools with pupils in each key stage responding to the survey (of the primary schools which responded, 470 had Key Stage 1 pupils and 562 had Key Stage 2 pupils). Around three quarters of schools offer French in Key Stage 2 (74 per cent in lower Key Stage 2 and 77 per cent in upper Key Stage 2) and around 20 per cent offer Spanish (20 per cent in lower Key Stage 2 and 19 per cent in upper Key Stage 2). Only four to five per cent of schools offer German, two to three per cent offer Chinese and one per cent offer Italian, Latin and Japanese, although this tends to be in upper Key Stage 2 (Years 5/6). Other languages offered are Russian and Arabic (two schools in each case teach these languages in Years 5/6 and one school in Years 3/4), plus Ancient Greek and Urdu (one school in each case).

In Key Stage 1, 40 per cent of responding schools offer French, 11 per cent Spanish, two per cent Chinese and one per cent German and Italian.

A comparison of these figures with responses in the 2012 survey reveals a slightly higher percentage of schools offering French, Spanish and German in Years 5/6 and the introduction of Chinese, Italian, Latin and Japanese in a small number of cases.

Figure 52: Languages offered in Years 5/6, 2012 and 2013\*



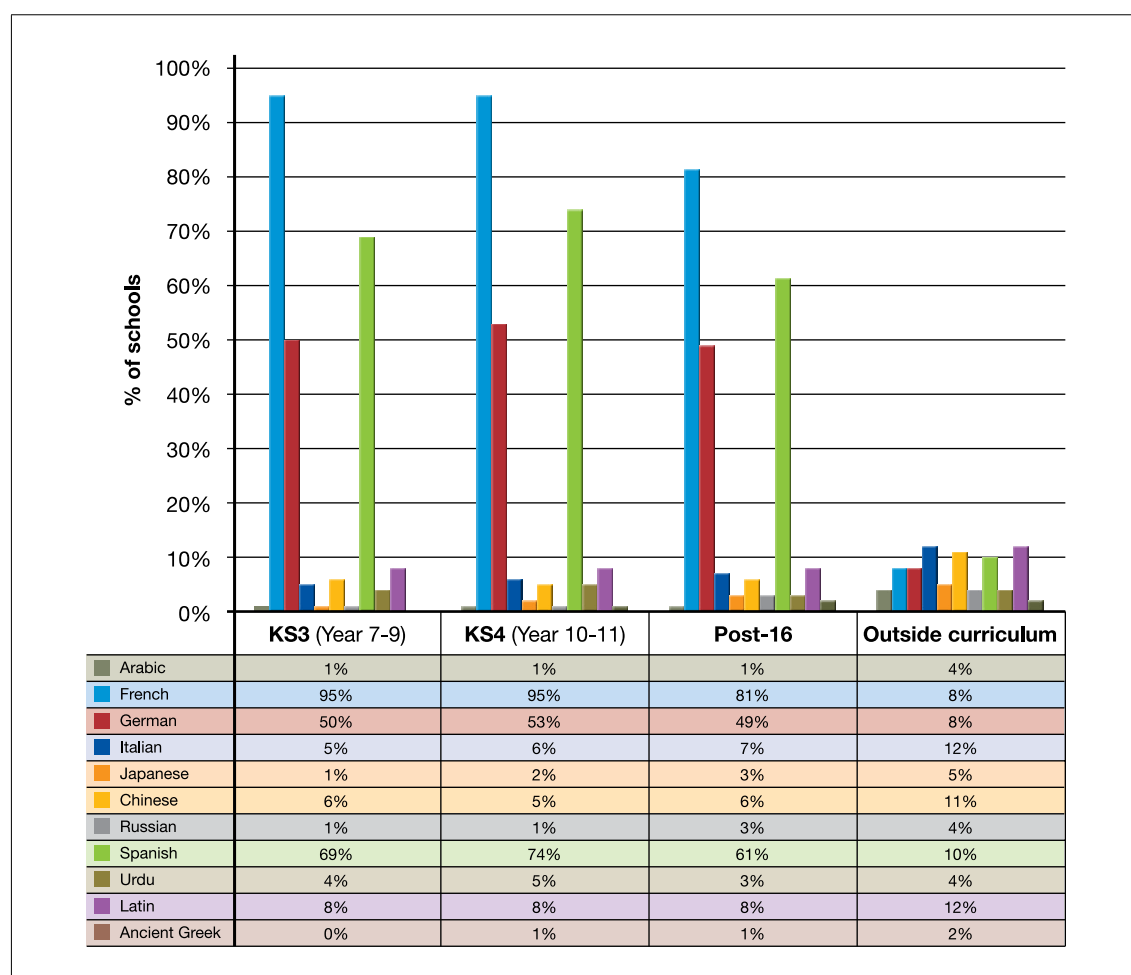
\*Multiple responses permitted

The modest increase across all languages in Years 5/6 is replicated for Years 3/4 (not shown). It will be interesting to explore in future years how the introduction of statutory language learning in Key Stage 2 and the requirement to focus on a single language impact on provision for lesser taught languages in primary schools. We do not have comparable figures on Key Stage 1 for 2012.

## 9.2 | Secondary schools

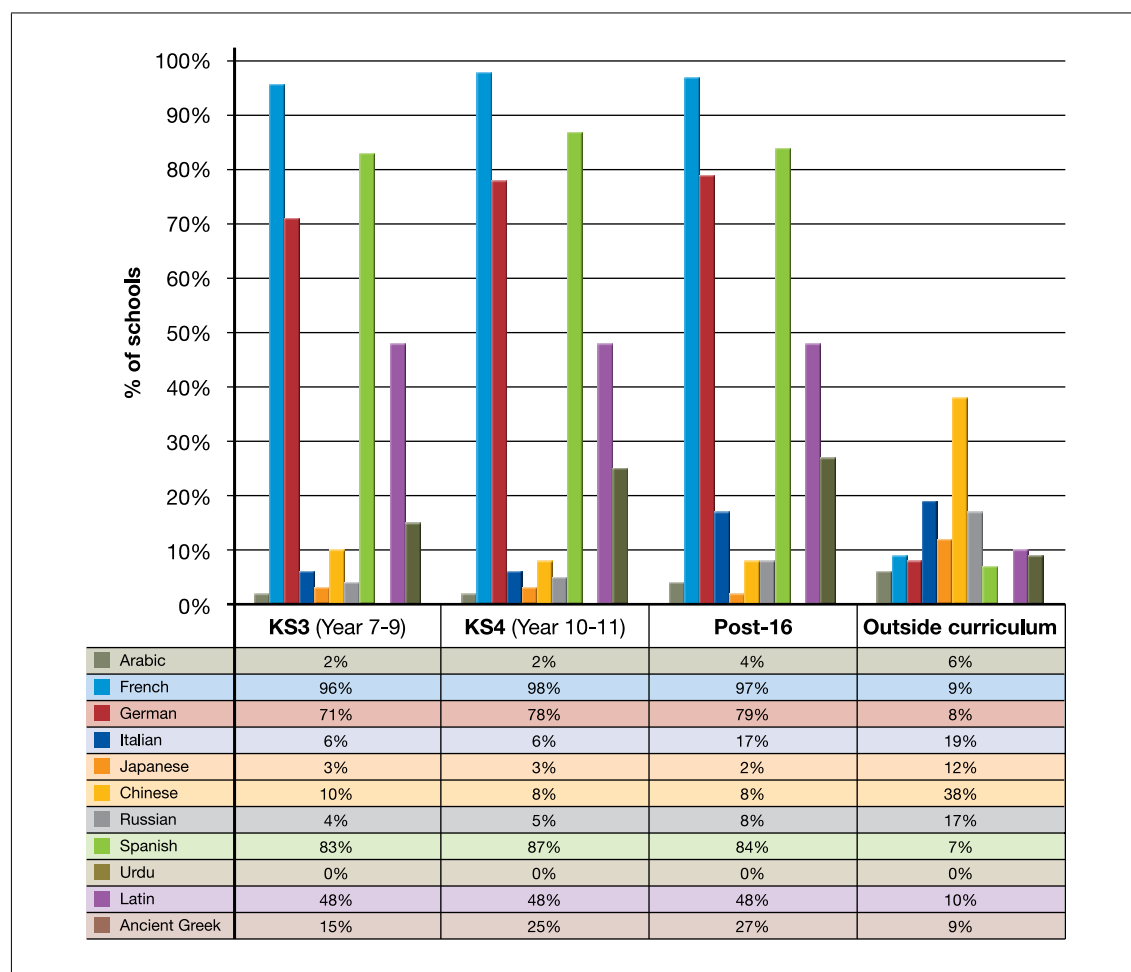
The data reveal that the 'big three', French, Spanish and German, are most widely taught within the secondary curriculum. However, outside curriculum time Italian, Latin and Chinese are offered by more than ten per cent of state schools. These and other lesser taught languages including Arabic, Japanese, Russian and Ancient Greek are more often taught as extra-curricular subjects than as timetabled options.

Figure 53: Languages taught in state secondary schools, 2013\*



\*Multiple responses permitted

Figure 54: Languages taught in independent secondary schools, 2013\*



\*Multiple responses permitted

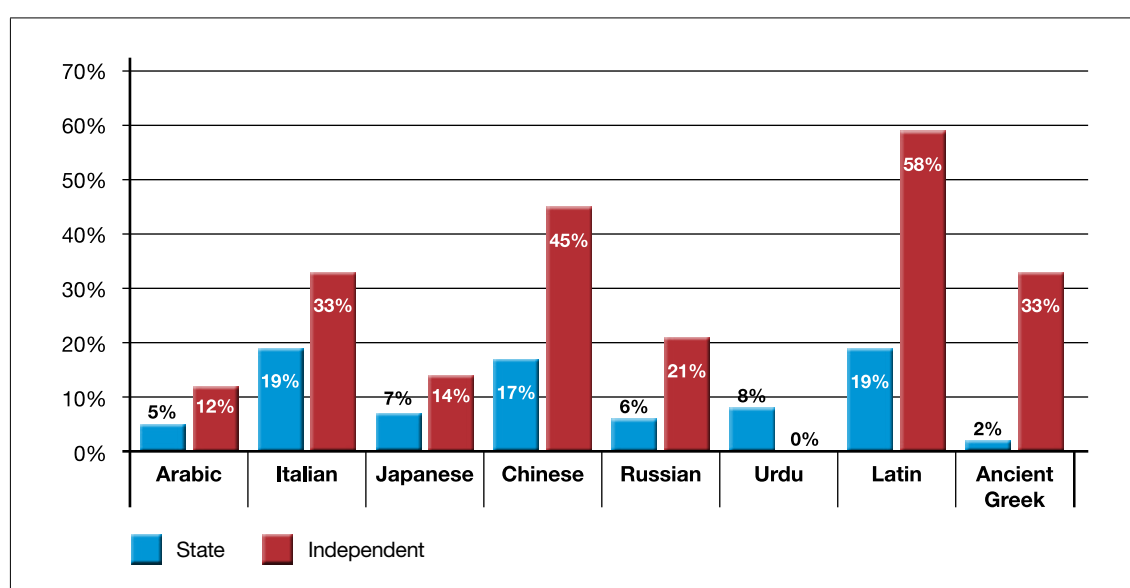
The range of languages offered for study in independent schools is richer than that in the state sector in a number of ways. Latin is more widely offered as a curriculum option – by around half (48 per cent) of independent schools, compared with only eight per cent of state schools. Similarly Ancient Greek is available at Key Stage 4 in a quarter of independent schools, but hardly at all in the state sector. Some ten per cent of independent schools and eight per cent of state schools offer Chinese as a Key Stage 3 subject, but the difference in access to Chinese is most evident in its provision as an extra-curricular subject: 38 per cent of independent schools offer it as an additional option outside the curriculum, whereas only 11 per cent of state schools do so.<sup>46</sup>

<sup>46</sup> There are some indications that a high proportion of A level entries for Chinese come from native speakers from China attending independent schools. Further investigation would be necessary to determine whether this phenomenon has impacted on the proportion of fee-paying schools which say they offer Chinese as an extra-curricular subject.

### The teaching of lesser taught languages – comparison between state and independent schools, any level

As the chart below shows, with the exception of Urdu, all the lesser taught modern languages, together with Latin and Ancient Greek, are offered more widely within the independent sector than they are in state schools. The broader languages offer in fee-paying schools has been noted in previous Language Trends reports and is not a new phenomenon.

Figure 55: Lesser taught languages offered at any level or outside the curriculum (state and independent schools) 2013\*



\*Multiple responses permitted

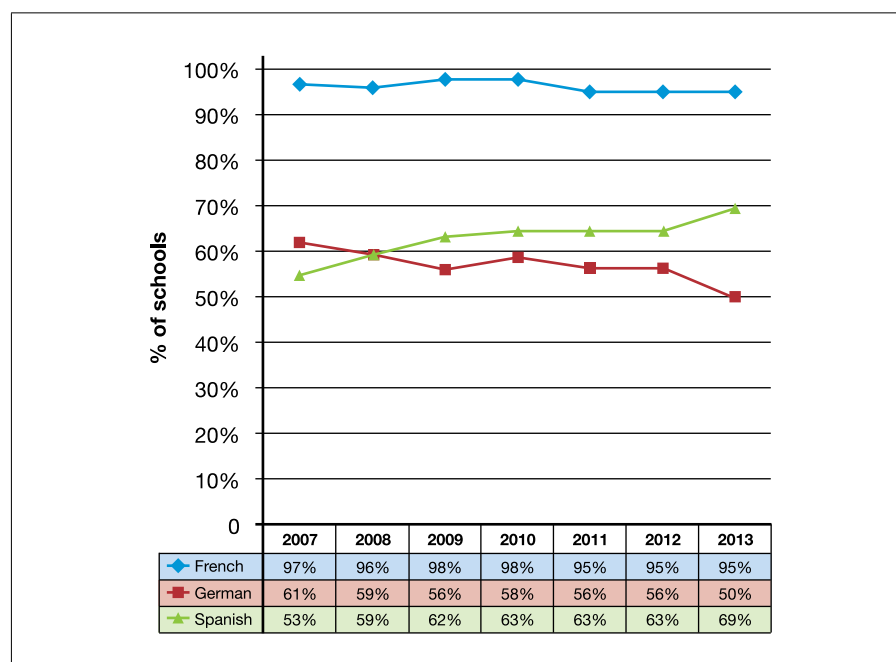
### 9.3 | Longitudinal perspective on the development of individual languages

This section focuses only on the study of languages at Key Stage 3 since this is currently the only compulsory phase of language learning for all pupils. Decisions about which languages are taught at Key Stage 3 are taken by the individual schools and may be based on a number of factors including the languages in which teaching staff are competent and those that the school thinks the pupils will find most enjoyable or easiest to learn.

#### French, German and Spanish

While French remains the most widely taught foreign language, offered by 95 per cent of state secondary schools, German, which was the second most widely offered language up to and including 2007, was overtaken by Spanish in 2008 and remains on a downward curve, with only 49 per cent of state secondary schools now offering it as an option in Key Stage 3, compared with 69 per cent which offer Spanish.

Figure 56: State schools offering French, German and Spanish at Key Stage 3, 2007–2013



#### Lesser taught languages

Apart from the 'big three', very few state schools offer teaching in other languages in Key Stage 3, and, as shown by the two charts which follow,<sup>47</sup> it is hard to discern any notable increase over the past three years.

<sup>47</sup> The languages have been presented in two separate charts for clarity.

Figure 57: State schools offering Arabic, Italian and Japanese at Key Stage 3, 2007–2013

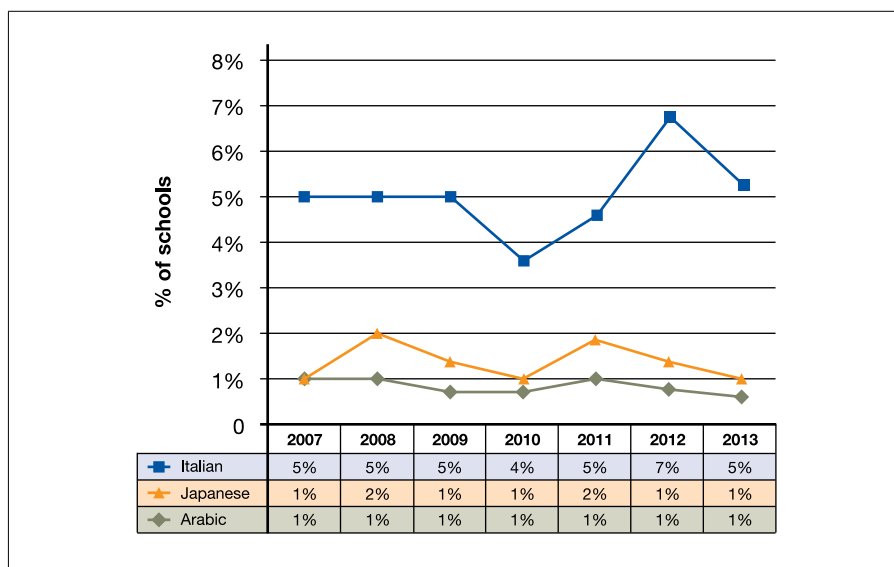
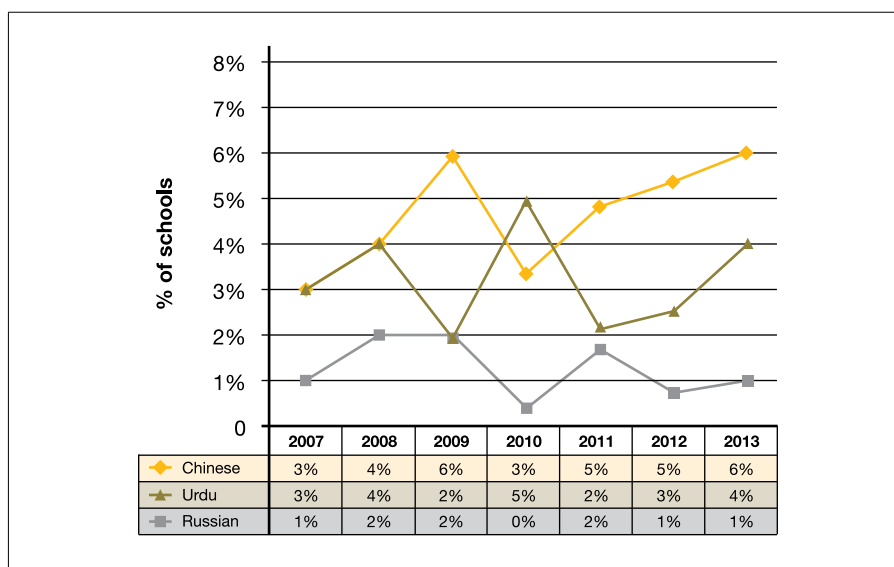


Figure 58: State schools offering Chinese, Russian and Urdu at Key Stage 3, 2007–2013



Of the lesser taught languages, only Chinese is showing any tendency to increase, in terms of schools' provision in Key Stage 3.

#### Major shifts in provision for different languages at Key Stage 3/4 and post-16, 2007 and 2013

The most significant changes to be noted over the period 2007–2013 are those relating to German and Spanish. Over the six-year period the proportion of state schools offering German at Key Stage 4 and post-16 has declined by nine percentage points, and at Key Stage 3 by 11 percentage points. Over the same period the proportion of state schools offering Spanish at Key Stage 4 and post-16 has increased by 18 percentage points and at Key Stage 3 by 16 percentage points. At the same time German has shown slight growth as an extra-curricular option and Spanish has declined as an optional, additional subject for study.

Table 15: Percentages of state schools offering Spanish, German and Chinese, 2007 and 2013

State sector	Schools offering Spanish		Schools offering German		Schools offering Chinese	
	2007	2013	2007	2013	2007	2013
Key Stage 3	53%	69%	61%	50%	3%	6%
Key Stage 4	56%	74%	62%	53%	2%	5%
Post-16	43%	61%	58%	49%	3%	6%
Extra-curricular	14%	10%	6%	8%	7%	11%

Although the numbers remain small, since 2007 Italian has grown as an extra-curricular option (from eight to 12 per cent of state schools, not shown) and Chinese has grown both as a mainstream curriculum subject and as an extra-curricular subject (from seven to 11 per cent of state schools).

In the independent sector, although the take-up for German may have fallen (see the following section), the proportion of schools offering it as a subject has not changed significantly. The number of schools offering Italian or Russian at Key Stage 3 or Key Stage 4 has declined, but the proportion of those offering these languages as an extra-curricular option has increased. The proportion of independent schools offering Italian post-16 has also grown. The number of schools offering Chinese in Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 as well as an extra-curricular option has grown (in the latter case by about 50 per cent from a small base). However, the proportion of schools offering it at post-16 level has not increased. Urdu has all but disappeared from the independent sector. As in the state sector, Spanish has grown as a curriculum subject in Key Stages 3 and 4 and post-16, but there is a corresponding decline in the number of schools offering it as an extra-curricular option. This growth is not as marked in the independent sector as it is in the state sector, as a greater proportion of independent schools were already teaching Spanish in 2007.



Table 16: Percentages of independent schools offering Spanish, German, Italian, Russian and Chinese, 2007 and 2013

Independent sector	Schools offering Spanish		Schools offering German		Schools offering Italian		Schools offering Russian		Schools offering Chinese	
	2007	2013	2007	2013	2007	2013	2007	2013	2007	2013
Key Stage 3	76%	83%	73%	71%	5%	6%	5%	4%	8%	10%
Key Stage 4	81%	87%	79%	78%	9%	19%	8%	5%	5%	8%
Post-16	75%	84%	81%	79%	15%	17%	10%	8%	8%	8%
Extra-curricular	13%	7%	7%	8%	9%	19%	10%	17%	25%	38%

Some six per cent of state schools and two per cent of independent schools have withdrawn all German teaching in the past three years, and three per cent of state schools have discontinued Spanish. However, six per cent of state schools have introduced Spanish as a new language, and two per cent have introduced German, while one per cent of state schools and four per cent of independent schools have introduced Chinese.

### Take-up for different languages

When schools were asked whether pupil numbers for the languages they teach are increasing or declining, the overall picture in state schools is of increasing numbers for all languages except Urdu, with Spanish increasing the most strongly (37 per cent of schools say numbers are increasing for Spanish compared with only 7 per cent which have seen decreased numbers). In the independent sector there is a much more varied picture, with more schools saying that numbers have declined for French and German than those saying they have seen increases. However, the independent sector reports overall increases in other languages including Spanish (again, most strongly), Latin, Ancient Greek, Chinese and Italian. Table 17 shows the proportion of state and independent schools reporting increases or decreases in pupil numbers for different languages.

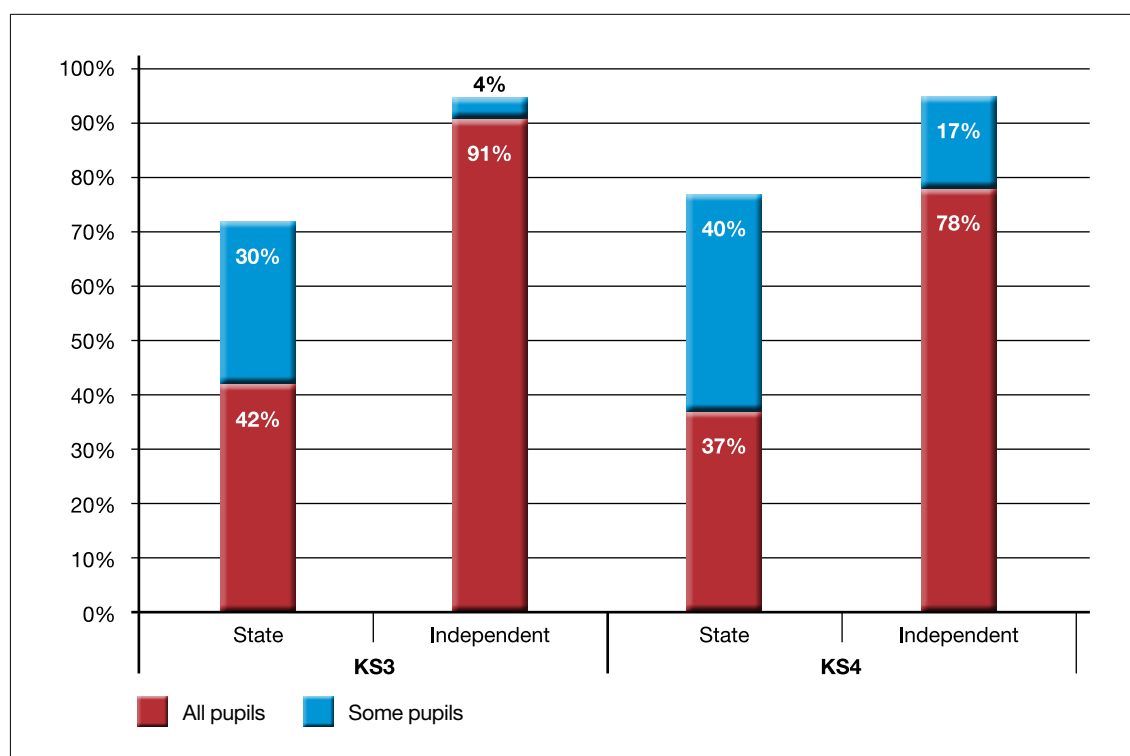
*Table 17: Changes in pupil take-up for different languages over the past three years (percentage of all respondents to this question)*

	Increase		Decrease	
	State	Independent	State	Independent
Arabic	1%	-	-	-
French	32%	9%	22%	34%
German	17%	18%	12%	33%
Italian	2%	3%	1%	1%
Japanese	1%	-	-	-
Chinese	3%	6%	-	1%
Russian	1%	1%	-	2%
Spanish	37%	48%	7%	4%
Urdu	1%	-	1%	-
Latin	2%	10%	-	2%
Ancient Greek	1%	4%	-	1%

## 9.4 | Opportunities for pupils to learn more than one language

The vast majority of both independent and state schools make provision for pupils to learn more than one foreign language in both Key Stages 3 and 4 (91 per cent and 78 per cent respectively).

Figure 59: State and independent schools offering pupils the opportunity to learn more than one language, Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4



In the independent sector, this offer is more likely to involve all pupils, but nonetheless more than one third of state schools offer two foreign languages to all pupils in Key Stage 3 and in Key Stage 4.

Respondents from the independent sector comment that:

*'Over 75 per cent of pupils here will study two or more MFL GCSEs. Over 50 per cent study an MFL at AS level in Year 12.'*

*'It is standard for all pupils to take two languages. Pupils are only allowed to drop one or both languages if they have significant learning difficulties.'*

Some independent schools go as far as to offer the opportunity to study three languages:

*'For pupils who want to study three MFLs the Head of Spanish teaches the Spanish after school on two nights per week for 75 minutes each.'*

In the state sector in Key Stage 4, the offer to study two foreign languages is more likely to be open only to some pupils rather than all pupils and there is some indication in the free comments that take-up is often quite small:

*'At Key Stage 3: 155/180 study two languages at Key Stage 4: 1/111 in Year 10 and 2/154 in Year 11 at Key Stage 5: no students study two languages.'*

*'... in Key Stage 4 pupils can study two languages but they usually study the second language at lunchtime and after school. There are only of handful of pupils currently doing this and they are students with a family background in it.'*

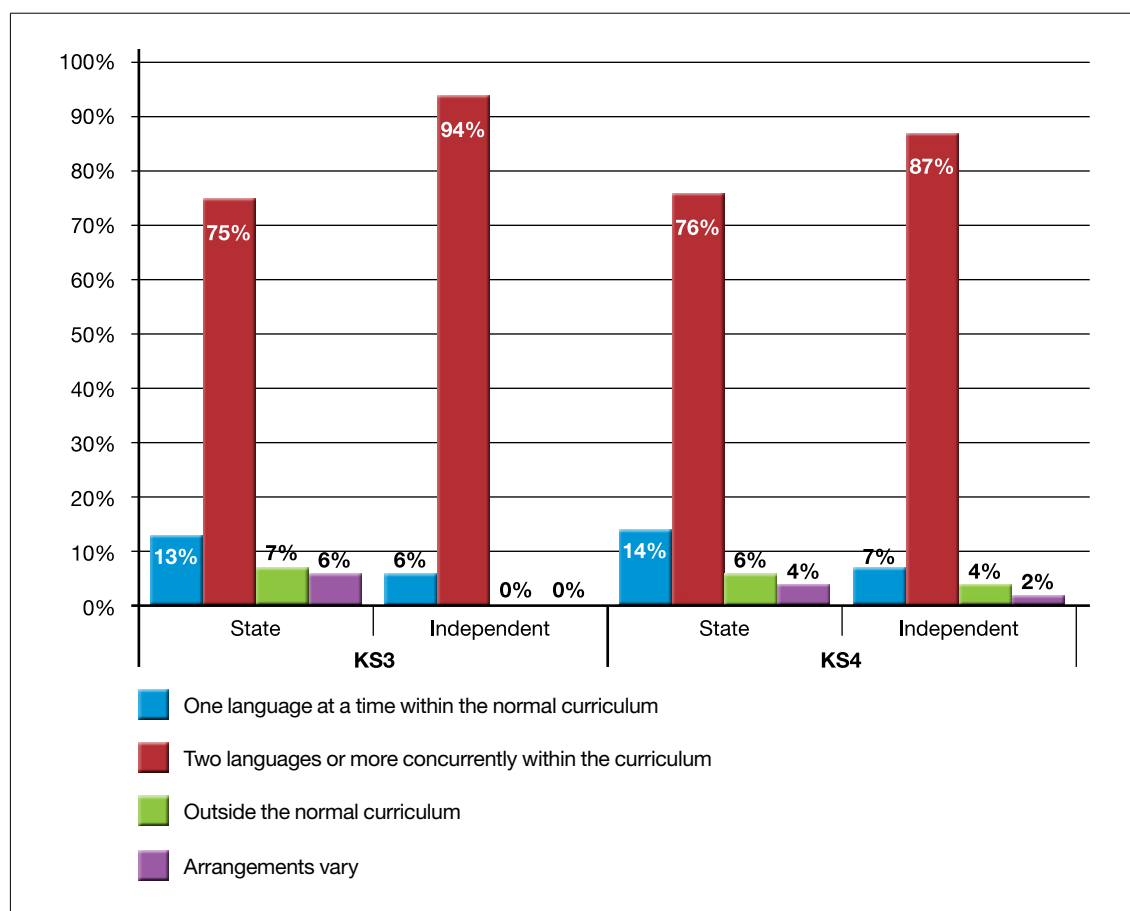
A total of 28 per cent of state schools do not cater for any pupils to learn a second foreign language in Key Stage 3 and 23 per cent do not do so in Key Stage 4. The reasons given for this are lack of appropriately trained staff, pressure on the school timetable from subjects considered to be of a higher priority or because the numbers of pupils wanting to take two languages is so small that it is not viable to create a group:

*'We lost lessons to English to boost literacy and levels in English. This meant German was lost from our curriculum at Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4. Currently in discussion to get a second language back.'*

### What type of arrangements do schools have for pupils to study more than one foreign language?

Where schools make provision for pupils to be able to study more than one foreign language, the most common arrangement, in both independent and state schools, and in both Key Stages 3 and 4, is for two languages to be studied concurrently within the normal curriculum:

Figure 60: Arrangements for pupils to study more than one foreign language (state and independent sectors)



State schools are more likely than independent schools to make provision for only one language to be studied at a time (13 per cent, versus six per cent in Key Stage 3) or for the second foreign language to be studied outside the normal curriculum (seven per cent versus zero per cent in Key Stage 3).

One school commented:

*'Pupils in higher ability sets are offered a second language. Native speakers can also take their home language at GCSE without lesson time – including languages not taught at school – Arabic, Dutch etc.'*

### 9.5 | Key points

- French is the language predominantly taught in primary schools. Three quarters of primary schools teaching a language offer French and one in five offer Spanish. Only small numbers of primary schools offer other languages.
- In secondary schools French, Spanish and German are easily the most widely taught languages. Arabic, Italian, Japanese, Chinese and Russian are offered much less frequently and often only as extra-curricular subjects. The range of languages offered is much richer in the independent sector.
- Spanish continues to grow in popularity. A total of 37 per cent of state secondary schools and 48 per cent of independent schools have seen pupil numbers for Spanish rise in the past few years. The recent increase in pupil numbers for GCSE in the state sector means that more state schools are now reporting increases than declines in numbers for French (32 per cent report increases and 22 per cent report declines). German has fared less well, with 17 per cent of state schools reporting increases in numbers and 18 per cent reporting declines. However, in the independent sector one third of schools report declines for French and for German.
- Opportunities to learn a second foreign language are quite widespread, though more so in the independent sector than in state schools. One third of state secondary schools and more than nine out of ten independent schools offer all pupils the opportunity to learn more than one foreign language in Key Stage 3.
- There are no strong indications that lesser taught languages are gaining ground in the school system. However, the study of Chinese is increasing slowly from a small base, with three per cent of primary schools offering pupils the opportunity to learn Chinese, six per cent of state secondary schools and ten per cent of independent schools offering the language as a curriculum subject. However, in common with other lesser taught languages, its sustainability is not assured.

# 10

## Conclusions

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This year's survey of primary and secondary schools in the state and independent sectors across England has taken place against a backdrop of considerable education reform. It has provided a unique opportunity to garner evidence of the impact of these reforms on the teaching of languages in our schools as well as to collect the views from teachers of all educational phases about the opportunities and challenges brought out about by changes at national level.

These concluding comments draw together the major themes which have emerged from this year's research exercise and present them in a way that aims to foster further discussion and debate between those key audiences who can improve or address specific issues affecting the teaching and learning of languages in this country.

### **Educational reform and the new National Curriculum**

It is clear from the quantitative and qualitative data gathered from this year's survey that the prospect of implementing the new National Curriculum presents a considerable challenge to the majority of schools (72 per cent of state secondary schools). The overwhelming majority of teachers are doubtful that the changes being introduced by the government will have a positive impact on the teaching of languages in their school. The principal concerns of secondary teachers relate to Key Stage 2 languages and the transition to Key Stage 3, changes to A levels with the likely negative effect on the numbers of students taking languages at A level and a range of issues concerning GCSE.

Primary school teachers are particularly concerned about the pressures that compulsory language teaching at Key Stage 2 will place on the curriculum and how they will be able to find sufficient time within the teaching day to be able to integrate languages properly so that the expectations of the new National Curriculum can be met. Other significant concerns about teacher subject knowledge, the assessment and monitoring of learning and ensuring effective transition for pupils from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3 are considered in more detail below.

Given the imminent introduction of compulsory language teaching in Key Stage 2 at the start of the 2014/15 academic year and the scale of challenge that this brings to many schools and classroom teachers, one might have expected to see this survey reporting strong evidence of CPD as teachers prepare to deliver this new subject to the levels expected by the new National Curriculum. However, the picture is rather one of a reduction in the number of opportunities for teachers to participate in CPD. The principal reasons cited are the constraints both on time and funding. At a time of rapid policy reform and an overt expectation of raised standards of teaching and pupil achievement, this is of particular concern. Schools and pupils would benefit greatly from teachers being able to improve or refresh specialist subject knowledge and to share best practice. Where CPD is being reported, it is based on the principle of 'cheapest is best' or internally organised within a single school. One interesting development is the rise in the use of social media, particularly Twitter, by teachers to aid their professional development and this area would merit further investigation.

### **Languages in primary schools**

The survey shows that many primary schools do not have access to teaching staff with specialist training in the teaching of languages to young children and that many primary classroom teachers have neither sufficient knowledge of another language nor sufficient confidence in their language skills to be able to teach a language to the level expected in the new National Curriculum. This expects pupils to achieve levels of proficiency in writing and reading in the language, in working at sentence level and to have an understanding of grammatical structures. These skills are particularly important for pupils in Years 5/6 in order that that secondary schools can build on their prior learning when they transfer to secondary school. While some schools have introduced specialist teachers into their schools in order to resolve this situation, others have sought to mitigate the lack of language skills through the use of native speakers of the language working as teaching assistants or foreign language assistants, or involved in the schools as governors or parents of pupils. The survey has not found evidence of the influence or involvement of the new Teaching Schools in the provision of CPD to increase the subject knowledge of primary school teachers charged with teaching a language.

There is currently a huge variation in the time that is made available for language learning at Key Stage 2 – from 20 to 80 minutes per week, as well as in the content of language tuition and whether or not schools opt to teach one language throughout Key Stage 2 or rather to teach language awareness through ‘taster sessions’ of a number of languages. In part it is this wide variety of approaches that can make it very problematic for secondary teachers in Year 7 to build on the prior learning of pupils. Secondary teachers are only too aware that if there is a very limited amount of time available for language teaching in Key Stage 2, children are unlikely to achieve the high expectations set out in the new National Curriculum document. At the same time, only 30 per cent (the same percentage as in 2012) of primary schools report having systems in place to assess or monitor language learning in Key Stage 2 and while a number report using the Key Stage 2 framework or similar, others express a need for additional support and guidance.

### **Transition from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3**

The failure of primary and secondary schools to connect and provide continuity at the point of Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3 transition is one of the most serious issues to emerge from this year’s survey. As Chapter 5 of this report shows, both sides are well aware of and struggle with a number of issues – ranging from communications, mismatch of levels and expectations, maintaining pupil motivation and professional support. While the majority of state secondary schools are unable to establish effective contacts with the large numbers of primary feeder schools they have, due to teachers’ workloads, financial constraints and geographical distance, primary schools would welcome greater contact and professional support as they prepare pupils to move to Key Stage 3. To highlight the point, this year’s survey data show that only 11 per cent of state secondary schools receive or ask for data on pupil achievements from feeder primary schools.



With the imminent introduction of compulsory language teaching at Key Stage 2, last year's Language Trends survey explored for the first time the extent of collaboration between primary and secondary schools to help ensure a smooth process of transition for pupils at this critical stage in their education. However, contrary to expectations, this year's survey reveals that the levels of collaboration between schools are decreasing rather than increasing and the number of secondary schools who report they are receiving pupils into Key Stage 3 with prior language learning has also dropped, from 84 per cent in 2012 to 72 per cent in 2013. Even in those cases where prior learning is noted, many secondary teachers are inclined to dismiss the learning as patchy, inadequate or inaccurate.

Seen from the other side, for many primary teachers a clear cause for concern is the fact that secondary schools are unable to provide pupils starting in Key Stage 3 with the certainty they will be able to learn the same language they learned at Key Stage 2 (this is the case in only 27 per cent of state secondary schools and 48 per cent of independent schools). This is often regarded as a contributory factor to pupil demotivation at the beginning of Key Stage 3. For secondary schools, starting all pupils with a new language can be a way to create a 'level playing field' in which all pupils can start with something new and the schools can overcome the wide disparity in learning experiences with which pupils start in Year 7. Primary schools, on the other hand, may have found themselves having to teach the language in which their teachers had most skill, regardless of what might subsequently be offered at secondary schools.

The extent of the systemic dysfunction revealed by the 2013/14 Language Trends survey between the majority of secondary schools and their primary feeders is a grave cause for concern and cannot help but impact negatively on pupils' learning experiences. However, it is difficult to see how the situation might be improved without some level of coordination and investment to ensure that the government's ambitious vision for schools is successful at the implementation stage.

### **Languages in secondary schools**

Since Key Stage 3 is currently the only key stage in English schools (with the exception of academies and free schools which are free to set their own curriculum) in which there is a statutory requirement for all pupils to learn a language, one might reasonably expect to see very high figures for the numbers of pupils studying a language. However, this year's Trends survey shows that there is a growing number of schools (27 per cent) who disapply lower-ability pupils in Key Stage 3. This is not the case in the independent sector where pupils with particular SEN needs are only rarely exempted from languages classes. Where state schools disapply pupils from learning a language, the reasons given are special needs (SEN), the need to develop English language skills (EAL) or because some pupils need additional support with literacy or numeracy. However, the result of this process of disapplication is that considerable numbers of secondary pupils are not being given the opportunity to access the many benefits associated with language learning, namely enhanced literacy and global citizenship. The situation for Key Stage 4 pupils in sponsored academies is also of concern, with fewer than 25 per cent of pupils in half of such schools studying a language.

### **The impact of the English Baccalaureate on Key Stage 4**

Although higher levels of take-up of languages at Key Stage 4 and above are still associated with more advantaged schools and those with higher educational achievement overall, this year's survey shows that the EBacc is having a positive impact on the take-up of languages at Key Stage 4 in all types of schools except those in the lowest quintile in terms of overall educational performance. While schools with high levels of academic achievement overall might be expected to field large numbers of pupils for GCSE in a language, it is very encouraging to see the scale of the increase in schools with mid to low educational performance – the second lowest quintile (see page 84 of this report). It is also interesting to note that 31 per cent of schools report that they have used the EBacc as an opportunity to encourage or enable students to take a qualification in their home language.

This year's survey data show that overall 50 per cent of schools now have more pupils of all abilities studying one or more languages at Key Stage 4, with 33 per cent of schools showing an increase of ten per cent or more in take-up numbers. However, it is important not to lose sight of the fact that while the introduction of the EBacc has undoubtedly had a positive impact on the take-up for languages at Key Stage 4, take-up does not necessarily translate into enthusiasm or, importantly, higher uptake in the sixth form.

Schools are very reluctant to make study of a language obligatory, preferring instead to encourage or recommend those pupils they believe capable of achieving the EBacc to include a language in the options they take forward at Key Stage 4. In the state sector the proportion of schools for whom the study of a language is compulsory in Key Stage 4 has reached its lowest ever level, at 16 per cent (down from 22 per cent in 2012). The proportion in the independent sector also continues to decline (69 per cent, down from 77 per cent in 2012).

This survey shows that as many as 30 per cent of state schools, compared with only 12 per cent of schools in the independent sector, do not make provision for all pupils to take a language at Key Stage 4 even though this is an entitlement subject and schools are required to make courses available to all pupils who wish to study them. This comparison between practice in the state and independent sectors is especially relevant given recent public debates about the need for equality of provision.

### Post-16 study of languages

The decline in the numbers of students choosing to take a language at A level which was first reported 17 years ago continues unabated and indeed has gathered pace. This should be of great concern to educationalists, employers and politicians alike, particularly since the numbers taking an A level in a language are now even lower (French down by 35 per cent and German by 50 per cent) than they were in 2000 when the Nuffield report concluded that the country was producing too few young professionals with good language skills to meet the country's needs. One of the issues frequently mentioned as a difficulty in recruiting to A level languages is the fact that students (as well as many schools and parents) do not see the value of languages for future employment or career enhancement, thereby reducing the likelihood of a language being selected for A level study. In spite of the many reports by business and research organisations as well as campaigns demonstrating the importance of languages skills to employers and to the country's economic prosperity, there clearly remains much to be done to show young people the value of languages alongside skills in subjects such as mathematics and science.

Of real concern is the rate of decline in the independent sector, which has traditionally been a strong source of linguists for study at higher education. The reasons given for this decline, namely harsh and unpredictable grading by examination boards and the need of students to be more certain of achieving the highest grades to secure university places, have been debated for a number of years now but very regrettably changes have not been forthcoming to halt or reverse the decline.

In the current difficult financial climate state schools face a particular problem because of the very low numbers of students wishing to study a language at A level. Constraints in funding, particularly noticeable in sixth form colleges in recent years, mean that schools and colleges are having to close courses where take-up is very low because it is not financially viable to run them with such small numbers. It is disappointing to see a subject which is academically challenging and which requires rigorous study being denied to students because of funding constraints.

While a number of teachers welcome the move to terminal examinations at A2 (rather than AS at the end of Year 12 and then A2 at Year 13) because they believe that an examination at the end of two years of study will be a better reflection of what students can achieve in the language, they do not believe that the move to a terminal exam at A2 will improve either the predictability of likely grades or the levels of take-up. Teachers (53 per cent in state schools and 40 per cent in independent schools) also report that students taking languages in the sixth form are more likely to drop out after AS level than they are with other subjects. This is sometimes the result of very able students who are hoping to secure university places to do medicine, dentistry or veterinary studies having chosen to work towards an AS in a language to enhance their university applications but in many more cases it is due to the big increase in difficulty between GCSE and AS level as well as the difficulty of predicting grades at A2. With many universities requiring candidates to achieve three A grades at A level, students naturally want to focus on those subjects which are most likely to give the results they need in order to take up their university places.

All these points make the outlook for languages post-16 very bleak indeed. The incorporation of languages as a foundation subject for all pupils at Key Stage 2 is a very welcome step, but it will neither arrest nor mitigate the crisis at the other end of the school cycle which requires active and sustained intervention if A levels in languages are to survive.

### **The international context**

While it is encouraging to be able to report the positive impact on languages take-up at Key Stage 4 resulting from the government's introduction of the EBacc in 2011, there remains much to be done to turn political vision into successful implementation. Across Europe, 61 per cent of lower secondary school pupils are already studying two foreign languages<sup>61</sup> and the European Commission's ambition to increase this to 75 per cent by the end of the decade highlights the gulf between language education policies in this country, where we struggle to enable all pupils to achieve a basic level in just one foreign language, and those of other advanced economies where the policy debate has already moved on to provision for the second foreign language. In today's world, English alone is not enough, either as a first language or as a second or foreign language.

England is certainly not alone in struggling to motivate its young people to value the ability to use a language other than their first language. As a multicultural nation England is in the fortunate position of having 18 per cent of primary pupils and 13.6 per cent of secondary pupils who already have at least one other language in addition to English,<sup>62</sup> but we cannot afford to fall into the trap of assuming that this means that monolingual English-speaking children do not need to learn other languages. To do so diminishes us all economically, culturally and personally.

This survey shows that there are a number of major issues to be addressed. These can be summarised as:

- ensuring that primary teachers are trained to deliver language tuition to their Key Stage 2 pupils to the level of national expectations
- building systemic cohesion between schools at the point of transition from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3
- eradicating the inequality of access and the exclusion of pupils from studying a language at secondary school
- reversing the steep decline in the numbers of students taking an A level in a language.

Each of these challenges necessitates immediate and sustained attention if all young people across the country are to have the opportunity to realise their full learning potential.

<sup>61</sup> European Commission (2012c)

<sup>62</sup> DfE (2013d)

## Appendix: Response profile

Language Trends Survey 2013 - Profile of Responses																			
		Independent						State-funded Secondary						State-funded Primary					
		Responses		Sample		Base		Responses		Sample		Base		Responses		Sample		Base	
Region	East Midlands	4	4%	32	6%	41	6%	27	7%	174	9%	256	8%	76	13%	289	10%	1453	10%
	East of England	14	15%	62	12%	77	11%	58	14%	220	11%	339	11%	71	12%	355	12%	1657	11%
	London	15	16%	89	18%	123	18%	49	12%	294	15%	438	14%	65	11%	330	11%	1660	11%
	North East	4	4%	14	3%	18	3%	19	5%	98	5%	149	5%	34	6%	157	5%	765	5%
	North West	9	9%	47	9%	73	11%	55	13%	279	14%	444	14%	104	18%	484	16%	2374	16%
	South East	27	28%	123	25%	165	24%	79	19%	317	16%	473	15%	73	12%	421	14%	2159	14%
	South West	7	7%	55	11%	78	11%	44	11%	194	10%	302	10%	54	9%	323	11%	1706	11%
	West Midlands	10	10%	47	9%	66	10%	48	12%	238	12%	370	12%	52	9%	311	10%	1588	11%
	Yorkshire and the Humber	6	6%	31	6%	46	7%	36	9%	186	9%	299	10%	62	10%	330	11%	1697	11%
Performance Quintile	A - high	27	28%	97	19%	138	20%	84	20%	383	19%	604	20%	119	20%	582	19%	2948	20%
	B	25	26%	108	22%	137	20%	89	21%	408	20%	603	20%	138	23%	575	19%	2828	19%
	C	16	17%	91	18%	139	20%	91	22%	408	20%	601	20%	116	20%	552	18%	2906	19%
	D	17	18%	98	20%	135	20%	78	19%	359	18%	598	19%	106	18%	570	19%	2905	19%
	E - low	11	11%	106	21%	138	20%	71	17%	393	20%	592	19%	102	17%	638	21%	3063	20%
	NA	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	2	0%	49	2%	72	2%	10	2%	83	3%	409	3%
%FSM eligible Quintile	Low FSM							120	29%	398	20%	615	20%	129	22%	603	20%	3090	21%
	Low Medium FSM							75	18%	397	20%	624	20%	119	20%	578	19%	2984	20%
	Medium FSM							85	20%	397	20%	604	20%	115	19%	600	20%	2972	20%
	High Medium FSM							71	17%	394	20%	614	20%	111	19%	576	19%	3015	20%
	High FSM							64	15%	412	21%	610	20%	117	20%	643	21%	2997	20%
	n/a							0	0%	2	0%	3	0%	0	0%	0	0%	1	0%
Response rate		96		19.2%				415		20.8%				591		19.7%			

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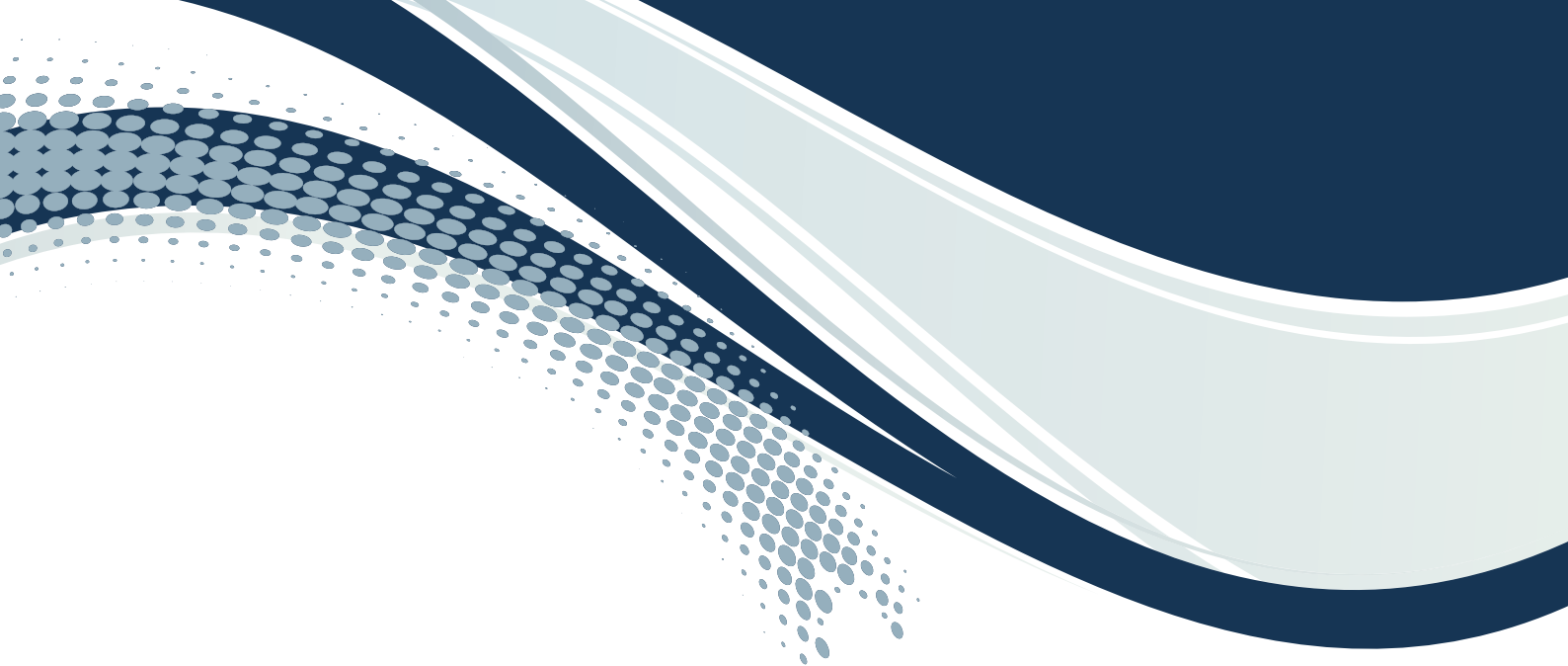
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